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MAY 2005

American Cinematographer

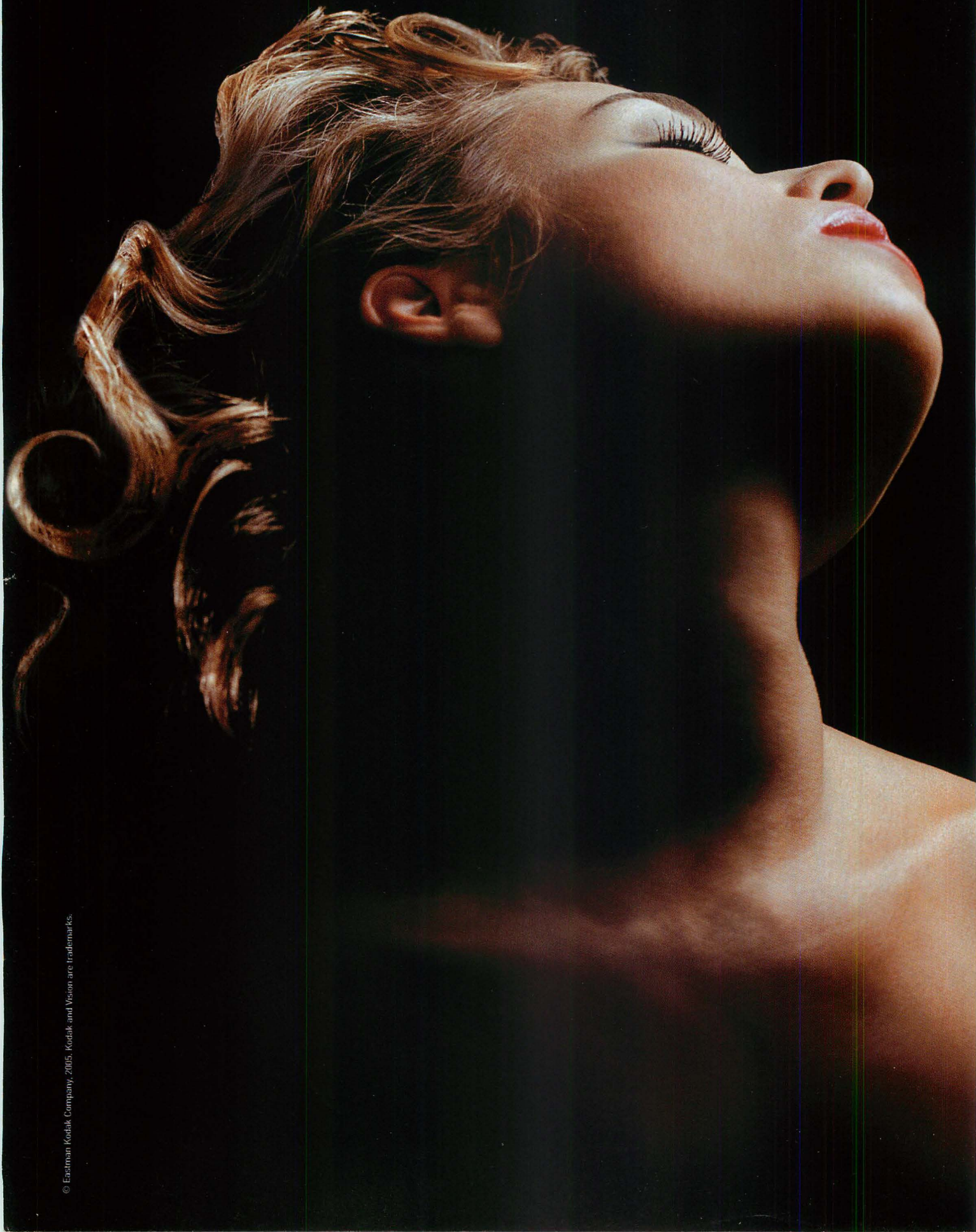
THE INTERPRETER

DARIUS KHONDJI, ASC, AFC
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HOUSE OF WAX
SIMON WINDON, ACS
SCULPTS A
HORROR SHOCKER

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Seamus McGarvey's Golden Touch.

Seamus McGarvey, BSC, was Director of Photography on films such as *The Hours*, *Enigma*, *Wit*, *Along Came Polly*, *The War Zone*



and *High Fidelity*. He received the Evening Standard British Film Award for Technical Achievement and was named one of "Variety's

10 Cinematographers to Watch in 1999." McGarvey plans to use Schneider filters on his next production.

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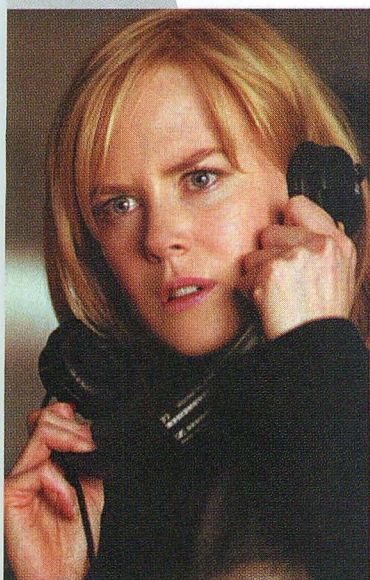
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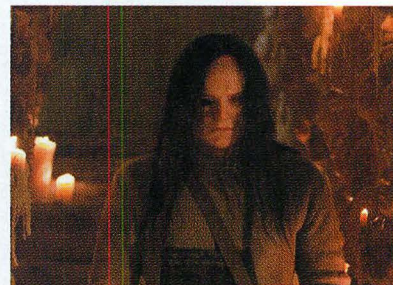
Technical wizards have their moment in the spotlight at the Academy's Sci-Tech Awards



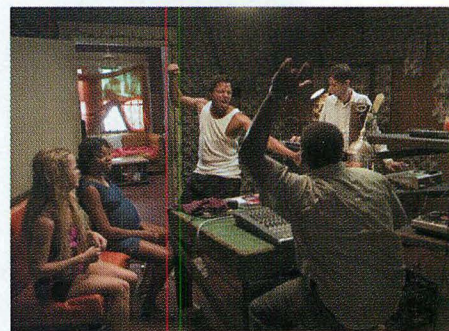
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United Nations
interpreter Sylvia
Broome (Nicole
Kidman) overhears an
assassination plot that
may also endanger her
life in *The Interpreter*,
shot by Darius
Khondji, ASC, AFC.
(Photo by Phil Bray,
SMPSP, courtesy of
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PUBLISHER Martha Winterhalter

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Christopher Probst and Jay Holben

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

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PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Erik M. Gonzalez

ADVERTISING

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e-mail: gollmann@pacbell.net

ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR Michael Trerotoli

561-637-8707 FAX 561-637-8779

e-mail: trerotoli@aol.com

ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR Scott Burnell

323-936-0672 FAX 323-936-9188

e-mail: sburnell@earthlink.net

CLASSIFIEDS/ADVERTISING COORDINATOR Sanja Pearce

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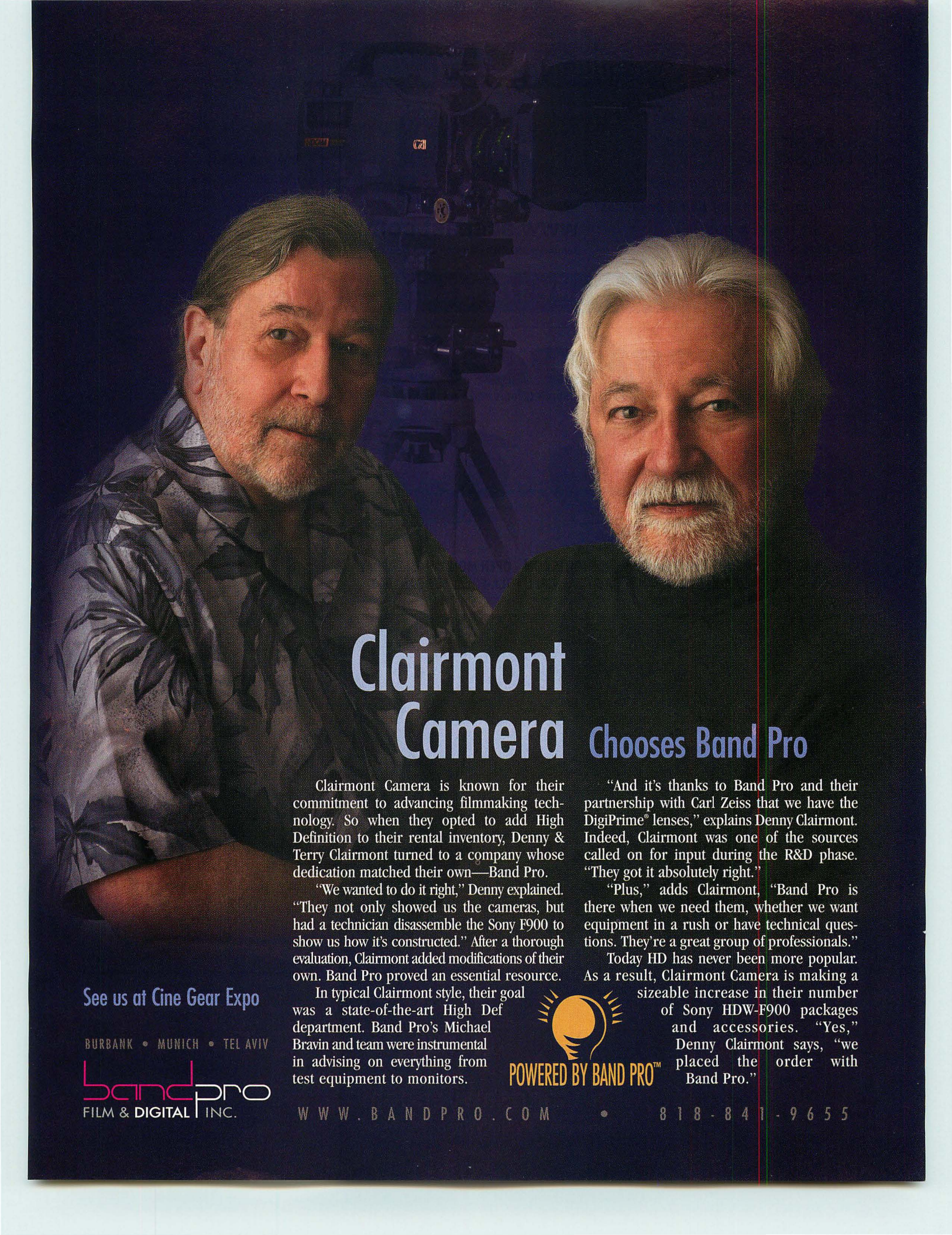
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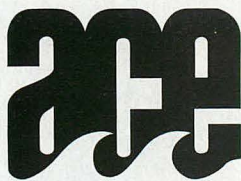
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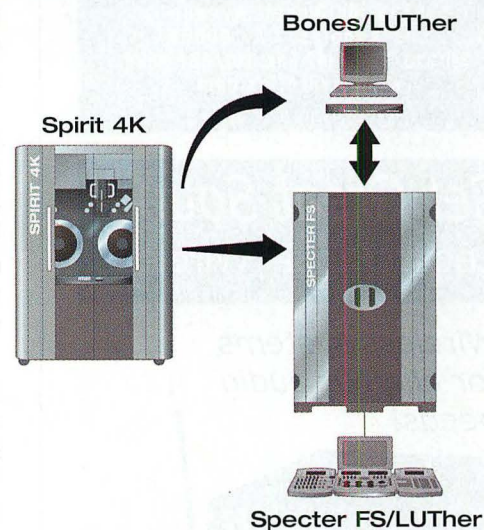
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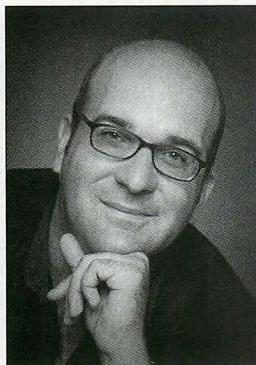
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Editor's Note



The United Nations has endured its share of controversy recently, but the organization's profile is being raised in a unique way with the theatrical release of the suspense thriller *The Interpreter*. Never before has the organization allowed a Hollywood production to film within its walls — even Sir Alfred Hitchcock was famously rebuffed when he asked permission to shoot a key sequence there for his 1959 classic *North by Northwest*. (Hitch re-created the building's distinctive lobby on a soundstage, but capably used a hidden camera to capture an establishing shot of Cary Grant walking up the real building's steps.)

To gain access, director Sydney Pollack demonstrated impressive diplomatic skills during a 30-minute meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who ultimately gave the green light. Recalling the experience, Pollack told New York correspondent Pat Thomson, "The U.N. has got far more important things to do than to worry about movies. I was very careful not to try to *sell* Mr. Annan. I just wanted to tell him about the film, and I assured him that there was nothing in it that would be embarrassing for the U.N., and that my sympathies were with the spirit of the U.N."

The show's cinematographer, Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC, was duly impressed by the setting. "I was so inspired by its architecture," he says. "The place is just unbelievable. The building is very, very strong — it *sweats* ambience." In Thomson's piece about the project ("Global Intrigue," page 32), Khondji details all of the tactics he brought to bear on this remarkable location.

The build-it-yourself method was applied to the horror movie *House of Wax*, shot by Steve Windon, ACS ("Burning Down the House," page 44). The titular museum and a surrounding town were constructed on 10 acres of land in Queensland, Australia, where AC field agent Simon Gray caught up with Windon. Although the location was difficult to access and offered limited options for placing lights, Windon found it to be "a spectacular setting that added so much to the look of the film. The landscape had a slight gradient, which meant we could build the House of Wax as the proverbial, malevolent 'house on the hill.' The set was surrounded by tall trees, which helped create the feeling that the town was cut off from the rest of the world."

Of course, filmmakers aiming to screen their projects at the Sundance Film Festival generally don't have the influence to schedule meetings with Kofi Annan or build sprawling sets. Instead, they must come up with cinematic solutions that will suit their indie-sized budgets. This year's festival offered many examples of creative thinking, and our team of Park City scribes (Rachael Bosley, Jean Oppenheimer, Jon Silberg, Patricia Thomson and yours truly) sought out the cream of the crop. Our annual roundup ("Sundance 2004: Vibrant Visions," page 54) details the work of Amelia Vincent, ASC (who earned Best Cinematography in a Drama honors for her stellar work on *Hustle & Flow*), Gary Griffin (who won the prize for documentary cinematography with *The Education of Shelby Knox*), Jo Willems (*Hard Candy*), Steve Yedlin (*Brick*), Bobby Bukowski (*The Dying Gaul*) and Lisa Rinzier (*Drum*). Additional coverage of Sundance films and indie cinematographers can be found in Production Slate (page 20) and Points East (page 104).

This issue also recaps several memorable events that occurred during Hollywood's "high season": the ASC and Academy Award announcements for Best Cinematography ("Artistry for the Ages," page 74); the ASC Awards weekend ("Festive Memories," page 77); and the Academy's Scientific and Technical Awards ceremony ("Honoring Ingenuity," page 85).

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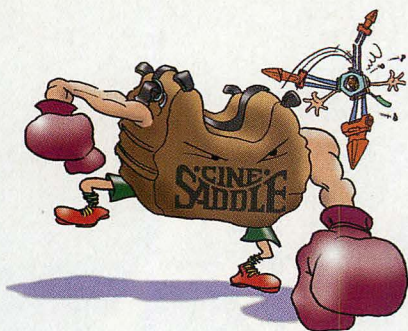
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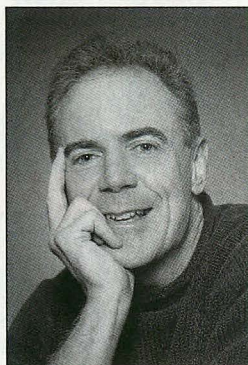
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President's Desk



In touting the ASC as the preeminent organization of its kind, it would be easy to claim that we attained this position purely through the efforts of the more than 600 cinematographers whose names have graced our roster since 1919. This would be foolish, though, as well as ignorant of long-standing precedent. No group ever gets to the top completely on its own, and we're hardly the exception. Without the contributions of a unique and equally talented subgroup — our associate members — the ASC's present stature would be immeasurably diminished. Indeed, whatever prestige and influence we've managed to reap over the years would never have taken root.

After being welcomed into the fold by the ASC's founding fathers in our very first constitution, associate members have developed their own tradition, one that is now stronger and more vital than ever. Who are our associates? Generally, they're representatives of the same industry manufacturers and suppliers whose goods, services and equipment we use every day. Individually, they're drawn from an astounding array of backgrounds, and each of them has been recognized for some time as an expert in his or her field. Most importantly, their approach to the ASC is universally underscored by a generosity that exceeds the mere sharing of knowledge or resources. There are a lot of reasons for this (and okay, maybe a few of them are self-serving), but there's no doubt that our associates' efforts are driven by a passion for cinematography that in many cases rivals our own. Though it's impossible to quantify all the great things they bring to our world, both as friends and professionals, it's not an exaggeration to say that the ASC couldn't function without them.

A closer look at our history shows that the vigorous exchange between ASC members and associates has repeatedly helped to inspire tremendous advances to the state of our art. While nearly all of our committees include associates, perhaps the most effective current example is our Technology Committee. Several times a month, this group — comprising the best minds in the business — convenes to dissect some of the most important issues we face. They go about their work in a careful way, and the amount of time that everyone contributes — in excess of their day jobs, free of charge — is truly remarkable. But what's most impressive is that our associates' belief in their goal is so profound that they are able to set aside company loyalties in favor of a clear-headed search for the truth. I'm privileged to sit in with them from time to time, and I can assure you that it's exciting to see them contribute on such a substantive level.

The reciprocal nature of the Technology Committee is ingenious in its simplicity. Just as we cinematographers gain access to rare expertise, the technicians and engineers learn to understand the needs and desires of the ASC members who will ultimately use the tools they produce. This exchange is in no way limited by the scope of one technology or another. Instead, our associates are helping us make the hard choices that will actually determine what the future will look like.

Invaluable and indispensable, the ASC's associate members have been on the scene since day one, and they will continue to be a force for as long as we exist. So hereafter, when you think of us as the ultimate guardians of the image, remember to think of our associates as well. We couldn't do our jobs without them.

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Global Village

by Jean Oppenheimer

In a post-World War II Soviet labor camp, Isak (Maja Stankovska, right) seeks refuge in an attic, where he sets up candles and performs rituals. Lem (Saso Kekenovski, left) sees Isak as his key to survival.



The Macedonian film *The Great Water* (*Golemata voda*) marked a reunion for Bosnian cinematographer Suki Medencevic (*The Hunter's Moon*, 007 — *Licence to Thrill*) and director Ivo Trajkov (*The Past*), who attended film school together in Prague in the late 1980s. Although Medencevic moved to the United States shortly thereafter and Trajkov stayed in the Czech Republic, they pledged to work together again one day. *The Great Water* presented the ideal opportunity.

The film was initially scheduled to shoot during the summer of 2001 but had to be postponed because of political instability in the region. According to Medencevic, the situation was still a bit tenuous when filming began in the fall of 2002.

Based on a 1971 novel by Macedonian writer Zhivko Chingo, *The Great Water* takes place in the former Yugoslavia immediately after the end of World War II. To tighten their grip over Eastern Europe, communist governments following the dogma of Soviet leader Joseph

Stalin set up labor camps where inmates were indoctrinated with communist ideology. Some of the camps were designed for the orphaned children of "enemies of the Revolution."

"The novel deals with a harsh reality yet is very poetic, and that became the key to the film's look," says Medencevic, who earned a nomination at Camerimage for his work. "We decided to film in the [Super 35mm] 2.35:1 aspect ratio because in addition to poetic realism, we also wanted to give the film a certain epic dimension. Given the huge exteriors and interiors we were working with and our limited budget, we couldn't go with anamorphic. Plus, we were sometimes working with 300 nonprofessional child actors. You get a bit more depth of field with Super 35, so if the kids don't hit their marks, it's alright."

Although the story begins in the present day — as the elderly protagonist, Lem Nikodinoski, is rushed to a hospital — the majority of it takes place in 1945 at the ideological labor camp and concerns the

relationship between the young Lem (Saso Kekenovski) and a mysterious boy named Isak (Maja Stankovska).

Medencevic wanted the picture to have a monochromatic color palette, but he also wanted to visually differentiate between past and present. For the hospital scenes, he created a sense of raw and gritty reality, and for the 1945 scenes, he generally went with a warmer, sepia tone.

The film opens on a close-up of Lem's eye, then cuts to his POV as he is wheeled out of an ambulance and into the hospital. "We go from the colorless gray of the outside world to the uncorrected fluorescent blue-green of the hospital corridors," says Medencevic. "For the emergency room, I wanted a pure, monochromatic blue. We couldn't get the super-blue Kino Flos, so I used 12K HMIs aimed through diffusion and gelled heavy blue instead."

Once the camera cuts to Lem's POV, the scene plays out in one continuous shot. "Camera operator Dejam Dimeski was lying on the stretcher and operating the camera using an unique kind of bungee rig created by our key grip, Nenad Vasic. The shot lasts for well over four minutes."

Medencevic put Antique Suede #1 and #2 filters on the lens for the 1945 sequences, and he and Trajkov chose locations that had no primary saturated colors. The exterior of the orphanage consists of a giant courtyard surrounded by gray walls, and the interiors were painted a grayish-green. With the exception of a pair of red shorts, wardrobe was restricted to earth tones. "Our color concept was monochromatic, with

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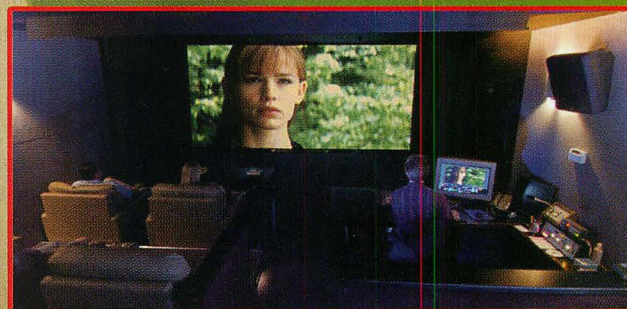
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Right: Isak and Lem must spend the night under a tree as punishment for an infraction. Below: Cinematographer Suki Medencevic gets the compound's courtyard ready for a shot in the light of dusk.



the exception of red, a color associated with communism," says Medencevic. "A key plot development concerns this pair of shorts, and we figured out ways to incorporate more red into the story."

Day exteriors were filmed in a mix of available light and a few HMIs. For day interiors, such as classroom scenes, HMIs were set up outside the windows. "Eliminating light stands in the room helped the kids forget it was a movie set, which allowed them to feel more natural," says Medencevic.

Given that he was frequently relying on ambient daylight, the cinematographer used Fuji Reala 500D, which "has great color rendering and was very flexible later in the digital intermediate [DI]," as often as possible. However, because it was difficult to ship film stock in from Germany on a regular basis, he often had to mix different film stocks in the same location using whatever was available on the camera truck, which included Fuji's Super F-64D

8522, Super F-250D 8562 and Super F-500 8572. "I prayed that the DI would help smooth out all those differences," he says with a laugh.

The show's camera package came from Blue Danube Media in Vienna, Austria, and included a Moviecam Compact, a Moviecam Super America and an Arri 435, along with Cooke S4 primes, a Zeiss 10mm lens, and Nikon 200mm and 400mm lenses.

The Great Water plays on both literal and metaphorical levels. Isak is a mysterious figure whom Lem sees as his key to survival in the camp. Although the character is intended to be Christ-like, Trajkov wanted to maintain a sense of ambiguity. "On day exteriors, we generally tried to keep Isak backlit, which put a slight rim around him," notes Medencevic. The character's first appearance coincides with a sudden shift in the weather. As he enters the courtyard, the sky darkens and it starts to rain. When he looks up, the rain stops. "We wanted to play the change of light on his face," says Medencevic. "When we first see him, his key light is a 12K HMI, completely flagged. As it stops raining and the sun comes out, I removed the flag to create the subtle effect of Isak coming to light."

At night, Isak finds refuge in the attic, where he sets up candles and performs rituals. "I wanted this secret spot to be the warmest place [in the film], so I used candles and soft sources that were sometimes gelled with double CTO.

"I like to use all kinds of diffusion," the cameraman continues. "For the candlelit scenes, I used white flannel not as a bounce, but right on the source, with the light shining through it. You lose a lot of intensity, but the light is so beautiful. Also, I couldn't use dimmers with the HMIs, so I would manually dim the lights simply by sliding a piece of sheet metal across them."

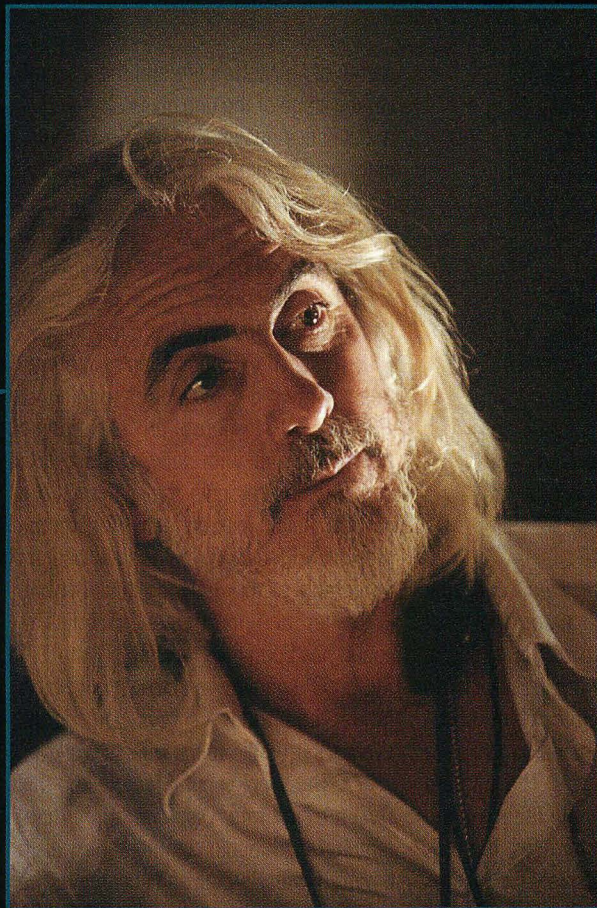
One of Medencevic's favorite scenes shows Lem and Isak spending the night standing under a tree as punishment for an infraction. The production had no Condors or Muscos, so Medencevic decided to use a spotlight atop the camp's prison-like tower, but he wanted to start the scene with a very stylized image. Although there is a spotlight on the boys, the area behind them is completely black. "You don't really know what's going on," Medencevic explains. "As the hours pass and the sky starts to brighten, you gradually see the wall behind the boys and you know they're in the compound."

In some scenes, the spotlight rakes across the courtyard. The production found an actual searchlight in Bulgaria, but there was no way to get it onto the roof of the tower. Instead, Medencevic retrofitted a 4K HMI, removing its lens and placing it inside a barrel. "I hoped it would flare enough so you could never really see the light source, but if you look carefully, you can see it."

In the DI suite at Digital Film Lab in Copenhagen, Medencevic "locked into the looks we wanted — day, night, candlelight, winter, summer, past, present. We then transitioned from one look to another, from cold to warm, from heightened reality to sepia, from present day to 1945." He praises colorist Demetri Kitsopoulos and Digital Film Lab president Kris Kolodziecki, noting, "Kris is both a pioneer of the DI and a cinematographer by training, and he and his team gave us maximum support at the most important moment for the look of the film." ■



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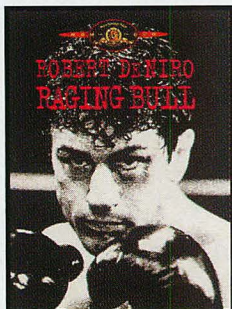
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Bob, thank you so much for sharing your creative vision.

—your Panavision family



DVD Playback



***Raging Bull* (1980)**
Special Edition
1.85:1 (16x9 Enhanced)
Dolby Digital 5.1, Monaural
MGM Home Video, \$29.98

When *American Film* magazine asked 54 film critics to name the most important American film of the 1980s, a majority of them chose *Raging Bull*, Martin Scorsese's lyrical, complex film about middleweight boxing champion Jake La Motta (Robert De Niro). The picture recounts La Motta's climb to fame as "the Bronx Bull," and as his star rises, the self-loathing bully obsessively punishes himself and those around him, including his devoted brother, Joey (Joe Pesci), and his wives, particularly young Vickie (Cathy Moriarty); he eventually destroys the relationships that are most crucial to him and winds up a lonely, tragic shadow of his famous self.

One of Scorsese's key collaborators on *Raging Bull* was cinematographer Michael Chapman, ASC (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Fugitive*), who had previously worked with the director on *Taxi Driver*, *American Boy* and *The Last Waltz*. Chapman had never shot a black-and-white feature and prepared for the job with much research. He and Scorsese agreed that the camerawork in the ring would be frenetic and diverse through careful choreography, and that much of the rest of the picture would be standard setups with a more realistic style. The contrast between the mundane environ-

ments of La Motta's life and the visceral, kinetic stage of the ring gives *Raging Bull* a distinctive quality, and Chapman's intricate work brought him his first Academy Award nomination, as well as awards from BAFTA, the National Society of Film Critics and the Boston Society of Film Critics. (The ASC honored Chapman with its Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004.)

MGM Home Video's recently released two-disc collector's edition of *Raging Bull* features an exceptional picture transfer with solid, sharp blacks and a wide grayscale that captures the movie's tabloid look perfectly. Though the previously issued DVD certainly had an acceptable picture transfer, this new one is bolder and more pronounced. The sound has been given a Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround upgrade, and the solid bass range beautifully shows off Frank Warner's dynamic sound-effects work.

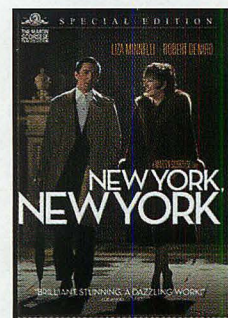
The supplemental features on this DVD are first rate. Disc one offers three feature-length audio commentaries, each of which is fascinating and absorbing. The first commentary, borrowed from the 1991 Criterion laserdisc edition of the film, is an outstanding discussion shared by Scorsese and editor Thelma Schoonmaker. The second, equally impressive commentary features a boisterous Chapman, Warner, music supervisor Robbie Robertson, producers Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff, actors Theresa Saldana and John Turturro, and casting director Cis Corman. An interview with La Motta by his nephew, Jason Lustig, headlines the third commentary track, which also features screenwriters Mardik Martin and Paul Schrader.

Disc two offers four new documentary featurettes: the 26-minute *Before the Fight* covers aspects of preproduction; the 14-minute *In the Ring* details how the filmmakers shot the boxing scenes; the 27-minute *Outside the Ring* dissects the creation of La Motta's domes-

tic world; and the 15-minute *After the Fight* details the project's postproduction and critics' responses to the film. Offering tremendous insight into the making of *Raging Bull*, these documentaries include extensive interviews with many principal crew and cast members, including De Niro, Moriarty, Pesci, Warner and Chapman. Rounding out disc two are the 28-minute documentary *The Bronx Bull: An Introduction to Raging Bull*, which offers interviews with La Motta, Schoonmaker and several British film critics; a photo essay comparing La Motta and De Niro; the film's theatrical trailer; and newsreel footage of La Motta defending his title.

Of all *Raging Bull*'s incarnations on home video, this new edition marks the most definitive presentation yet. Considered by many to be the definitive Scorsese film, *Raging Bull* is a brilliantly executed tale of a man who is his own worst enemy, a contemporary American tragedy viewed through the eyes of one of the nation's most accomplished filmmakers.

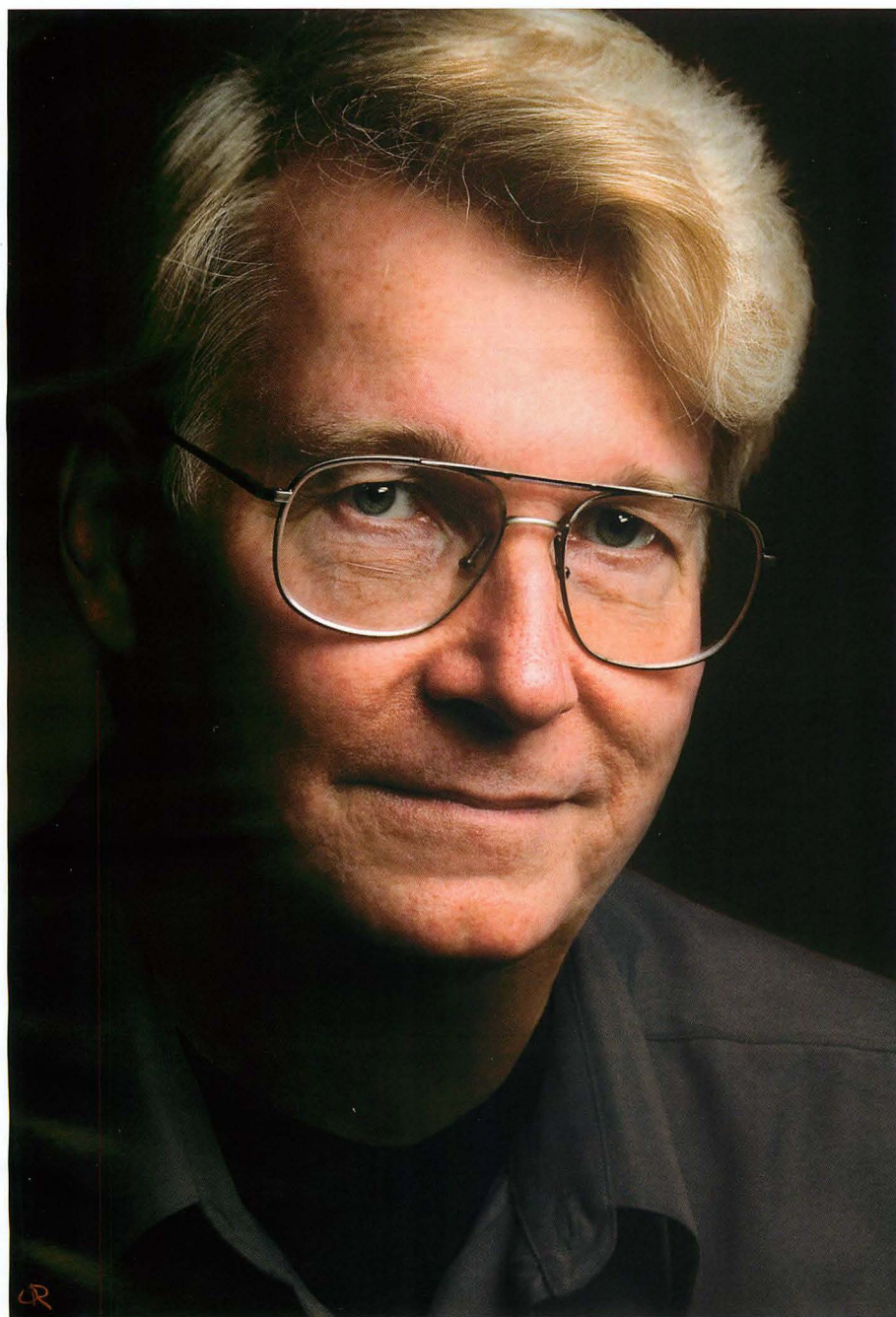
—Kenneth Sweeney



***New York, New York* (1977)**
Special Edition
1.66:1 (16x9 Enhanced)
Dolby Digital 5.1, Monaural
MGM Home Video, \$14.95

After a truncated version of *New York, New York* was theatrically released in 1977, the picture was considered by many to be a directorial failure for Martin

JOHN HORA, ASC



"I have regularly referred to issues of American Cinematographer to review recent techniques and approaches to new technologies. I also find much of interest in issues that date back to years when the art was still very new.

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— John Hora, ASC

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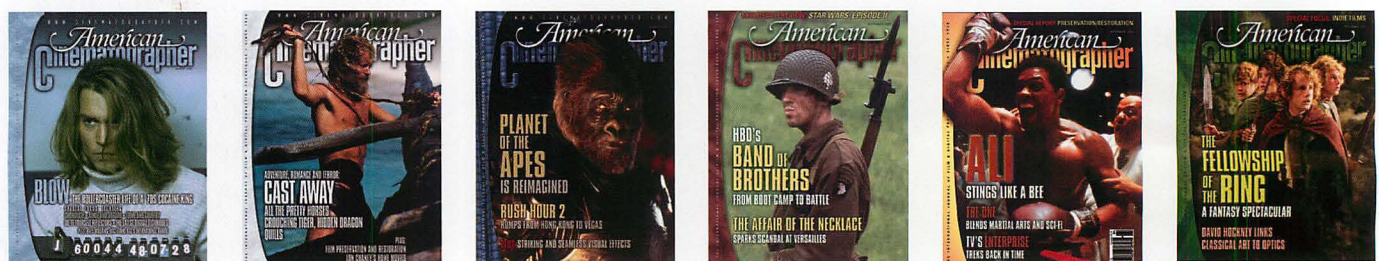
2003



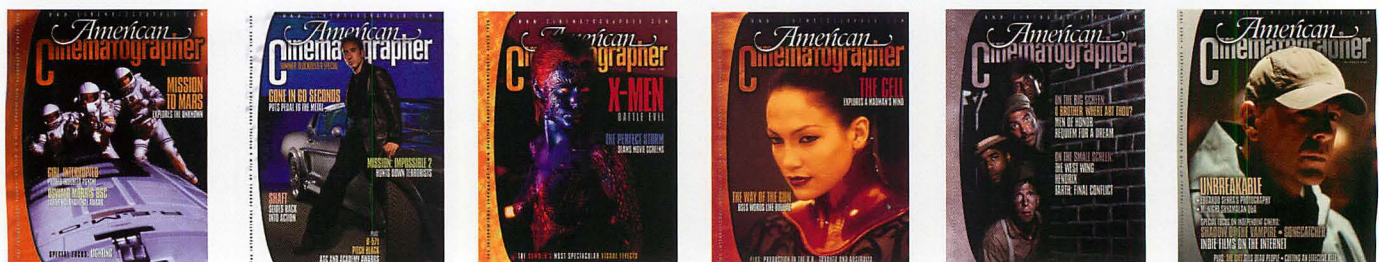
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2001



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Scorsese, who was hot off the successes of *Mean Streets*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *Taxi Driver*. An homage to post-war movie musicals and "women's pictures," *New York, New York* seemed an unlikely choice for the director, who was seen by many as a progressive, sometimes angry and often violent voice of the new generation of American filmmaker. It wasn't until 1981, when Scorsese's preferred, 164-minute cut of *New York, New York* was given a theatrical release, that the picture appeared to find an audience. Suddenly, this tribute to the Technicolor fantasy world of the film musical — one that focuses on the darker reality of the characters' lives — became an overlooked masterpiece.

New York, New York begins in Times Square on V-J Day, 1945, as Jimmy (Robert De Niro), an impetuous but charming saxophone player, hits on singer and USO girl Francine (Liza Minnelli). Though they dislike each other almost instantly, their onstage chemistry leads them to team up professionally and hit the road with a band that Francine headlines. The ambitious Jimmy soon talks Francine into marrying him, and although he quickly tires of his role as key sax player, he reluctantly stays with the band when Francine announces she is pregnant. As their ambitions and accomplishments take divergent paths, the couple's personal troubles mount.

In his desire to re-create a rich Technicolor look of the late 1940s and early 1950s, Scorsese chose Laszlo Kovacs, ASC (*Easy Rider*, *Paper Moon*), to help secure the texture on the single-strip Eastman color stock of the 1970s. Kovacs shone a full spectrum of light on the work of production designer Boris Leven, art director Harry Kemm and costume designer Theadora Van Runkle, who all used and exaggerated a wide range of primary colors. Scorsese wanted *New York, New York* to have a dreamlike artificiality to contrast with the drama of Jimmy and Francine's problematic relationship, and the collaboration among the artists working behind the scenes was extremely successful. The picture's visual style manages to re-create a bygone era and look crisp and contemporary. Kovacs'

arresting camerawork is evident throughout and is especially noteworthy during the "Happy Endings" fantasy sequence, which expertly recalls some of MGM's most memorable musicals. (Cut by Scorsese for the film's 1977 release, the climactic "Happy Endings" sequence was restored for the 1981 re-release.)

MGM Home Video has finally released *New York, New York* on DVD, and the lush, vibrant picture transfer recreates Kovacs' work nicely, capturing the film's unique visual tone. The sound has been digitally enhanced in a Dolby Digital 5.1 mix that is full and well rounded, particularly during musical sequences. A monaural mix is also included.

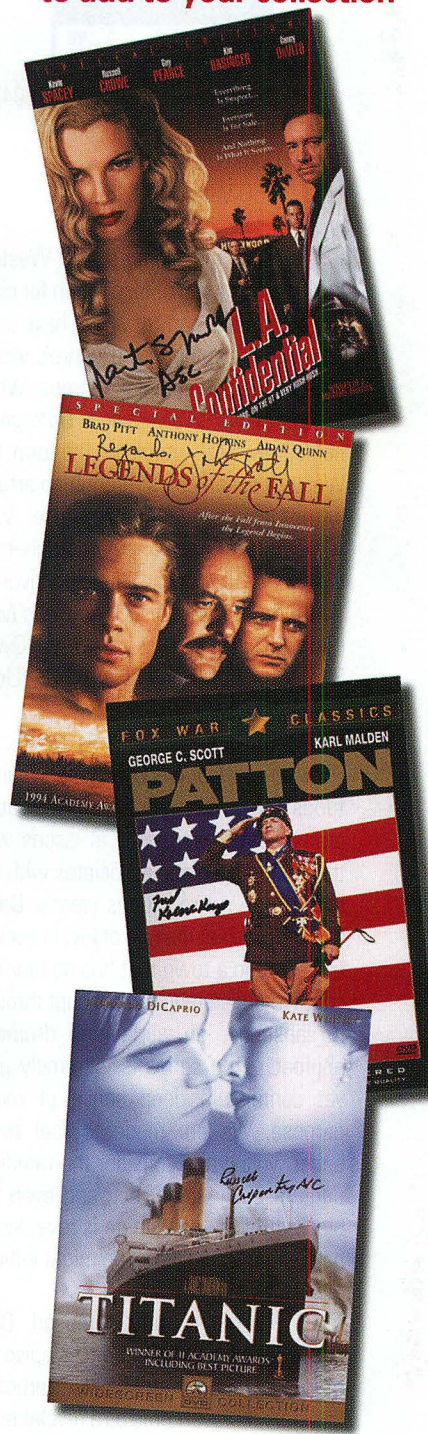
With the exception of a new introduction, this DVD's supplements comprise some of the materials previously released on MGM's excellent 1993 laserdisc of the film. The most substantial of these is Scorsese's pensive, articulate commentary, which is shared with film critic Carrie Rickey (whose comments seem more obvious than insightful). Also borrowed from the 1993 laserdisc are programs of outtakes, deleted scenes, stills and trailers. Sadly, however, only about half of the deleted scenes featured on the laserdisc are included on this DVD, and hundreds of interesting production stills were also axed, leaving just a few dozen for the DVD. Other laserdisc features missing from this DVD are brief but revealing video interviews with Scorsese and Minnelli, and the film's shooting script. Although this DVD features plenty of supplements, it seems odd that MGM didn't include all of the existing supplements to create the definitive DVD presentation.

A tale of two artists whose relationship is destroyed by competition and success, *New York, New York* remains one of Scorsese's more passionate films, and his unusual decision to both embrace and indict the film musical has since been explored by other filmmakers with mixed results. *New York, New York* is one of the most creative and personal films in the director's body of work, and it has only gotten better with age.

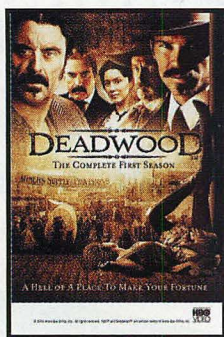
— Kenneth Sweeney

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Deadwood: Season 1 (2004)

1.85:1 (16x9 Enhanced)

Dolby Digital 5.1

HBO Video, \$99.95

Since the silent era, the Western has been a source of inspiration for cinematographers, many of whom have done great work capturing the genre's varied landscapes and complex themes. When *Dances With Wolves* and *Unforgiven* helped revitalize interest in the form, the Western began going through an artistic (if not commercial) renaissance, with some of the finest cinematographers in the world bringing new perspectives to the tradition in films such as *Dead Man* (Robby Müller, BVK), *Wyatt Earp* (Owen Roizman, ASC) and *Wild Bill* (Lloyd Ahern II, ASC).

The latest entry in this cycle is the HBO series *Deadwood*, a visually sumptuous and thematically provocative drama that explores moral issues with the kind of rigor one associates with the best of the genre. Series creator David Milch examines the role of law in society by depicting a town that has no law; we come to understand the concept through its absence, an audacious dramatic approach. The series is extremely gory yet contains a deep sense of moral purpose. We are made to feel every bullet wound and consider the ramifications of each violent act, and even the blackest of the characters is revealed to have more layers than one might initially expect.

HBO's recently released DVD boxed set presents the first 12 episodes of *Deadwood* in pristine letterboxed transfers that will come as a revelation to viewers familiar with the show only through standard-definition broadcasts.

The visuals consistently match the conceptual ambition of the scripts, and the chiaroscuro interiors, sunlit Western landscapes, and seamless integration of CGI effects look fantastic in this presentation.

The show's look is established in its pilot, shot by Lloyd Ahern II, ASC and directed by Walter Hill. Frequent collaborators, Ahern and Hill are modern masters of both the Western and the action film, and the pilot has the meticulous visual detail that is on display in their other forays into the genre. Ahern's work strikes an unusual balance between stylized beauty and harsh realism, much as the spoken language of the series alternates between ornate Victorianism and profanity. The images eschew sweeping vistas in favor of cramped, dirty spaces, and Ahern finds the poetry in those spaces by giving the series a look that owes something to the tradition of film noir.

Film students would do as well to study the pilot for *Deadwood* as they would a classic John Ford or Howard Hawks Western. Throughout his career, Ahern has proven adept at defining characters by their placement in the landscape (*Geronimo*), and at shooting intense bursts of action in confined spaces (*Trespass*, *Turbulence*), and both skills are put to fine use on *Deadwood*. The pilot is a minor masterpiece of visual storytelling, as dozens of characters and several narratives are established with style, clarity and humor.

As with the HBO series *the Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, the pleasure of watching *Deadwood* increases significantly as the narrative progresses. In subsequent episodes, cinematographers David Boyd, Xavier Pérez Grobet and James Glennon, ASC follow Ahern's lead yet also bring their own approaches to the material. All of the cinematographers are distinctive stylists who are as proficient at freewheeling action as they are at the painterly compositions that characterize the show's quieter moments.

Given *Deadwood's* emphasis on language, the DVD commentary track by series creator Milch is surprisingly dull. There are long, empty spaces where he

says nothing, and when he does speak, it is often to mumble something incoherent or irrelevant. Fortunately, Milch opens up in a pair of interviews in which Keith Carradine (who plays Wild Bill) talks with him about the show's approach to historical accuracy and its use of language. These conversations are entertaining and informative, as Carradine is an excellent interviewer with an obvious passion for the series.

On the series' fourth episode, Carradine provides his own commentary track, along with co-star Molly Parker. Like Milch's track, this commentary initially has a lot of dead spaces, but as the episode progresses, the actors relax and provide a number of insights into their characters and the series.

Additional supplements include two other entertaining actor commentary tracks, one by Brad Dourif and Robin Weigert, and another, more irreverent track by Timothy Olyphant and Ian McShane; a rather standard behind-the-scenes documentary featurette; and a featurette on the history of the real Deadwood. Overall, the extras in this presentation are a bit disappointing, but the impeccable transfers of the episodes, which yield new rewards upon repeat viewings, make this boxed set a worthwhile purchase.

— Jim Hemphill

**NEXT MONTH
IN DVD PLAYBACK**

***Incident at Loch Ness* (2004)**

Cinematographer:

John Bailey, ASC

***Wind* (1992)**

Cinematographer:

John Toll, ASC

***Panic in the Streets* (1950)**

Cinematographer:

Joseph MacDonald, ASC

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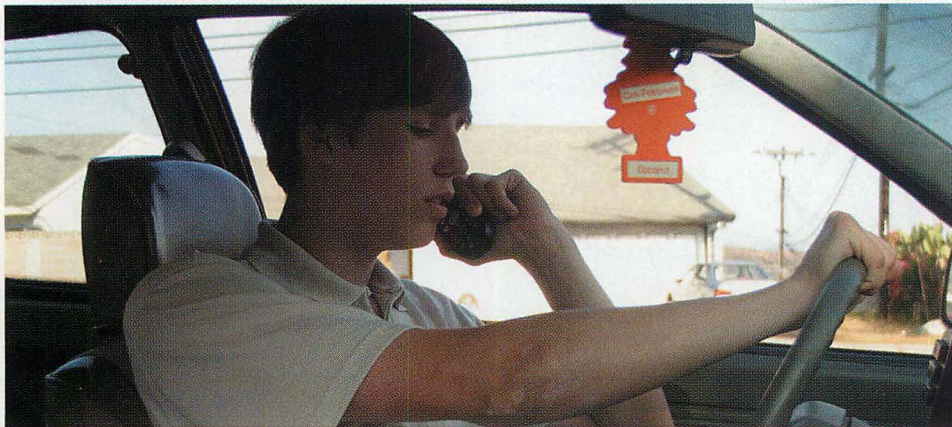
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Production Slate

Honing Images on Indie Budgets



Jimmy (John Patrick Amedori) is one of the youths whose whirlwind day is tracked in *Little Athens*, shot by Lisa Wiegand.

Partying Too Hard

by Hugh Hart

When director Tom Zuber first approached Lisa Wiegand last April about shooting his independent feature *Little Athens*, he already had a specific look in mind for his film, which traces four groups of misguided, small-town teenagers over the course of one tumultuous 24-hour period. The long day culminates in a late-night party that spins out of control. "When I initially read the script, I imagined it would be in the vein of *Bully* [shot by Steve Gainer, ASC], with handheld, frenetic camerawork," Wiegand says. "But Tom had a totally different take on it. He wanted to make it feel really epic, so he had all of these storyboards designed with frames in a widescreen aspect ratio."

Little Athens, featuring an ensemble cast that includes D.J. Qualls and Rachel Miner, cost less than \$1 million to make. The challenge for Wiegand was how to capture widescreen grandeur on a modest budget. Zuber and producer Josh Lawler had envisioned shooting the entire movie on 16mm. However, Wiegand soon discovered that it was difficult to

get a good deal on those packages. "When I looked into shooting anamorphic 16," she says, "it was hard to find those sorts of lenses, and it was also hard to find bargains in postproduction to support that kind of approach."

Wiegand instead recommended shooting in the widescreen Super 35mm format for the daylight portion of the movie, and Zuber and Lawler signed on. "The great thing about the whole process with Tom and Josh is that they were really receptive to what I had to say," Wiegand offers. "When Tom told me about his vision for the film and I responded with my ideas, they took the time to educate themselves about the different techniques I talked to them about, even if at first it seemed like those approaches might be more expensive. They made the calls and wound up getting a lot of support from a lot of big vendors in town. Tom and Josh were able to secure our camera package through a grant from Panavision, which was amazing because without it we probably would not have been able to shoot 35mm."

The Panavision package included a Panaflex G-2 camera and a set of MKII lenses, which Wiegand had never used

before. "I was worried about flaring in the lenses because Tom wanted a lot of bright sources in the backgrounds of shots," she notes. "I did some tests with the MK IIs and they held up amazingly well, so I was happy to use them."

During preproduction, Wiegand convinced her director to try a digital intermediate (DI). "Image manipulation wasn't new to me, because I was familiar with digital programs like Photoshop and I've done a lot of image manipulation with stills. I've also done a lot of image manipulation in telecine working on projects that finish on video, so I know what is possible in the digital realm."

Wiegand had also researched the DI process in a number of trade journals, including *AC*: "I keep up to date by reading articles where people discuss the DI as something that's becoming more and more important in the filmmaking process. Tom and Josh are savvy guys, and they were able to reference articles to see why I was suggesting digital manipulation. Also, a lot of the films that I've admired in the past few years have used the DI process, so I started to realize all the potential for image manipulation."

Once the filmmakers saw a DI as the best way to execute the ambitious look envisioned for *Little Athens*, Burbank's Level 3 Post put together an affordable package for the project. Notes Wiegand, "We didn't have a huge budget that allowed us to actually design everything the way Tom wanted it, so many of the things he wanted to do seemed next to impossible without some sort of manipulation capability. That made it much easier to decide on a DI. If we had an affordable DI, we could achieve a lot of what he wanted to do,

Little Athens photos by Bobby Brill, courtesy of Lisa Wiegand.

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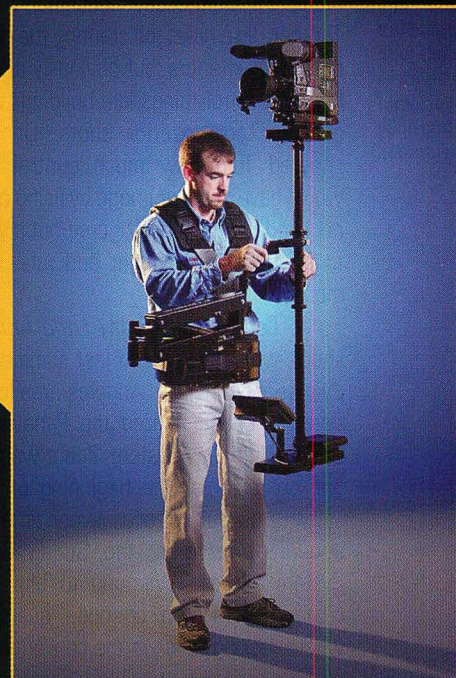
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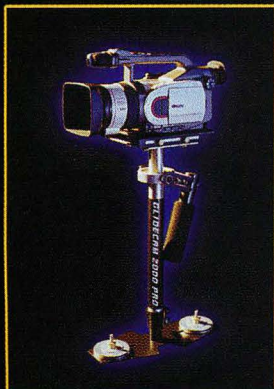


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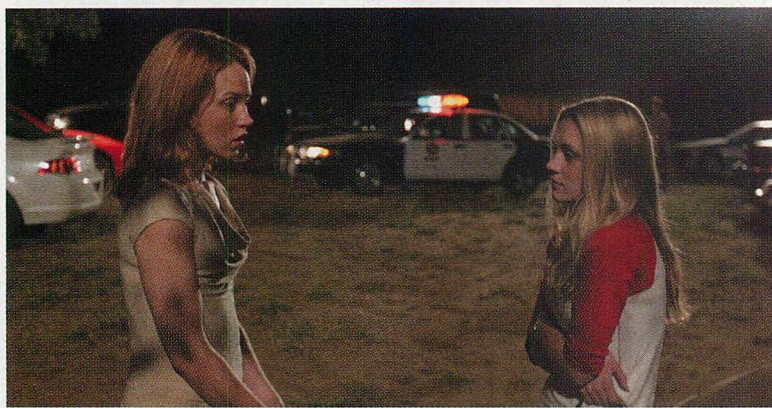


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Emily (Michelle Horn, left) and Allison (Rachel Miner) are detained by the police after a party gets out of hand. Though *Little Athens* is a low-budget film, Wiegand was able to use a digital intermediate, which helped her achieve a blue wash with red elements and bright highlights that came through (top image) during the party scene — something she could not accomplish with camera filters in the original photography (bottom image).



such as isolating different colors.

"Tom wanted each character's storyline to have its own color — orange, blue, yellow or green," she elaborates. "The production designer, Abbe Thorner, did a great job creating the color design for interiors, but obviously it was hard to control things like buildings and cars for our exterior shots. Once I showed Tom how much control we would have over our image by using a DI, he loved it. Then Josh figured out a way to fit it into the budget and raise the money."

Early in the 25-day *Little Athens* shoot, which took place last summer in Sylmar and other Los Angeles-area locations, Wiegand utilized the Panavision Swing Shift Lens System. Zuber wanted one character at the beginning of the story to be out of focus every time he appeared onscreen; the Swing Shift System allowed Wiegand to blur the character's face in cramped quarters, where racking focus in the conventional manner proved unfeasible. "Sometimes

we'd stage a shot so that the character would have his back to the camera, and as soon as he turned around we'd do a rack focus to make him extremely out of focus," she explains. "But in smaller locations where that wasn't possible, we used the Swing Shift System to help control our focus."

Little Athens' narrative flow abruptly accelerates in the third act, when all four story lines converge at a wild, late-night keg party. For this section, Wiegand and Zuber crafted a distinct visual vocabulary that would heighten the tension of the climax. Says Wiegand, "Tom wanted everything that happened during party scene to seem completely different from the footage we had shot during the day, so that it would get progressively more intense."

The 25-minute party sequence was defined through a variety of elements. Wiegand switched formats, dropping Super 35mm in favor of Super 16mm. "Instead of that epic, clean feel of the day scenes, we wanted a grainier,

more intimate feel, which we got from using 16mm's much smaller negative and a more maneuverable camera. We also wanted the depth of field to feel totally different from the rest of the film. Since the party scene includes a lot of different characters from other storylines in the background, we knew 16mm would give us the depth of field we needed to show those people a little bit better."

Additionally, Wiegand, who operated the camera, shot the night scenes with a handheld Arri 16SR-2 and switched film stock from the Kodak Vision 250D 5246 used for the daylight scenes to Vision2 500T 7218. "I could have chosen 7298 or 7279, which are also 500-speed stocks," she points out, "but I wanted something with more latitude. Since I knew we were doing a DI, I wanted to get as much information as possible onto the negative. The 7218 gives you a lot of detail in the shadow, which was great because we were doing these night exteriors on a really low budget in a gigantic backyard. I knew I could always get rid of the information during our color-timing sessions, but I wanted the option of retaining that level of detail."

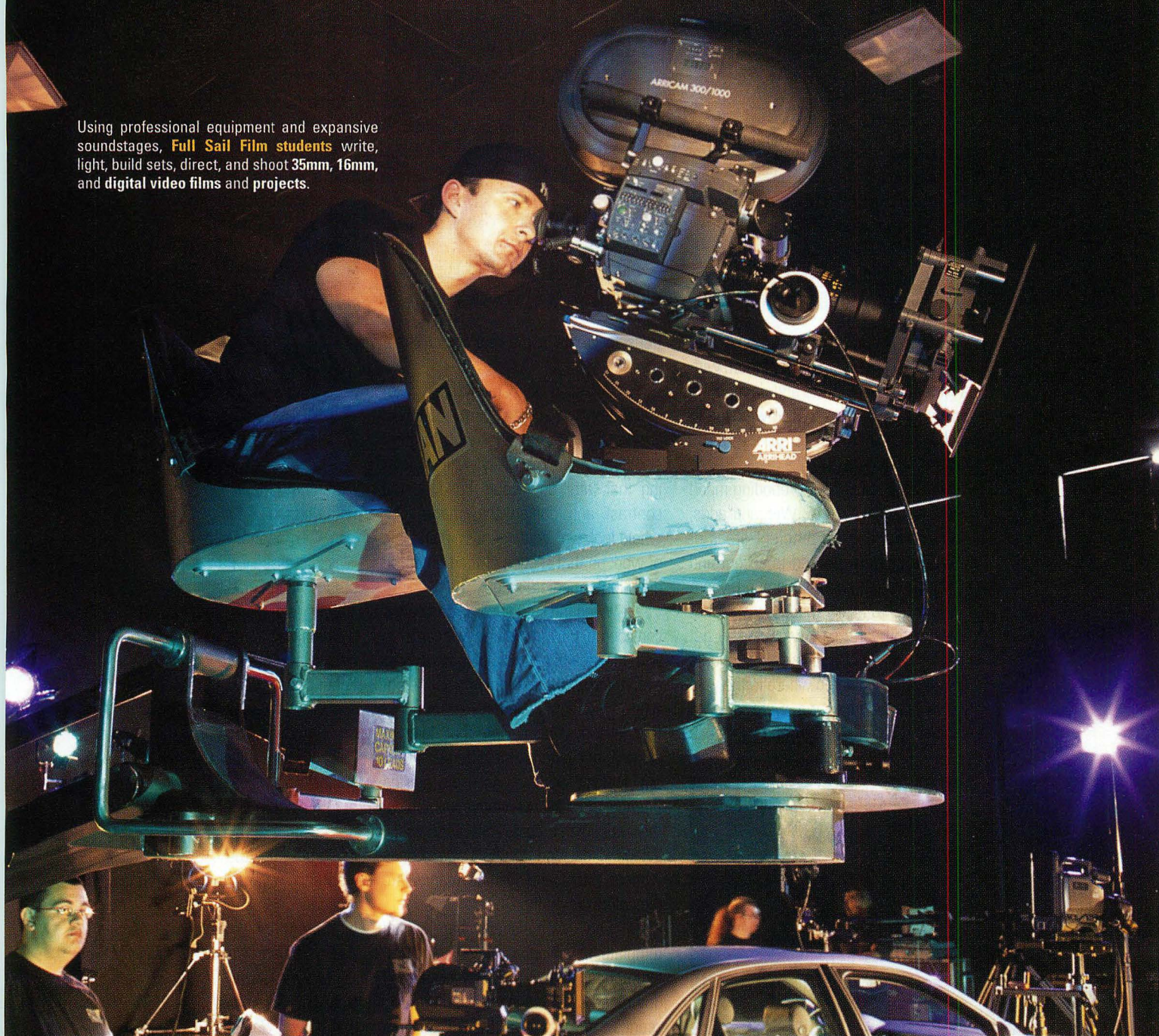
The party scenes' cool color tone represented a radical departure from the earlier, more warmly lit sequences. "We wanted those day scenes to be warm so the audience would really feel the heat of this hot summer day that leads up to the tragic evening event," Wiegand explains.

Wiegand's main lighting units of choice for the daytime portion of *Little Athens* were 2.5K and 4K HMIs. "Many times," she says, "I used the HMIs with very little diffusion to create hard light that would suggest a sunny, hot, summer day. I also really liked using Kino Flos. We had several in our package. Sometimes, to give add a little bit of warmth, I'd replace one or two of the daylight-balanced tubes with 3200°K tubes." When overcast weather threatened continuity, Wiegand used decamired filters to sustain the illusion that all of the events were transpiring on a single, consistently warm day.

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Above: Emily ponders her life at a public pool. **Right:** Wiegand (on camera) records a bird's-eye view of Emily after she takes a drastic measure. **Below:** Cool shades — Wiegand uses video goggles borrowed from Stephen Lighthill, ASC to operate in cramped quarters.

Wiegand set up two Condors in the backyard. "We rigged each of them with a Nine-light Maxi-Brute and rimmed the basket with Par cans, which we used to highlight specific areas in the background," she notes.

To enhance the foreboding mood with additional texture, Wiegand adds, "we put Par cans in different areas of the yard that we wanted to accent and did some lighting from the ground where we wanted to fill in. There were a lot of trees in the yard, so I was able to get great shadows by moving the Condors around. Depending on where in the yard we were shooting, we were able to shoot through the leaves and use those

trees to create some really cool shadows."

Wiegand deliberately used a lot of light for the extended party sequence: "I shot the night exterior stuff brighter and flatter than I normally would, knowing that later on I could build up the contrast and darken the image. The whole look was contingent on doing lots of work on that section of the film at the digital-intermediate stage."

Wiegand says several ideas were considered, but "in the end, we came up with the idea of having a blue wash over everything, with red elements and bright white highlights coming through. I thought about achieving that look in camera, so I tested some different filters, but it didn't work — once we started filtering to make everything really blue, the reds didn't come out very well." Wiegand decided to shoot the scenes without filters and instead manipulate the colors during the DI.

She established her visual template in advance by searching the Internet for images of party scenes. "I downloaded images of dark party scenes, processed them through Photoshop and found a look that Tom and I both liked, where the reds would pop and everything else would be monochromatic shades of blue."

Zuber says he appreciated Wiegand's resourcefulness in the face of *Little Athens'* limited shooting budget: "By going through Photoshop, Lisa demonstrated what we'd get with different combinations of desaturation. We didn't have the money to actually go practice [through tests], so it was

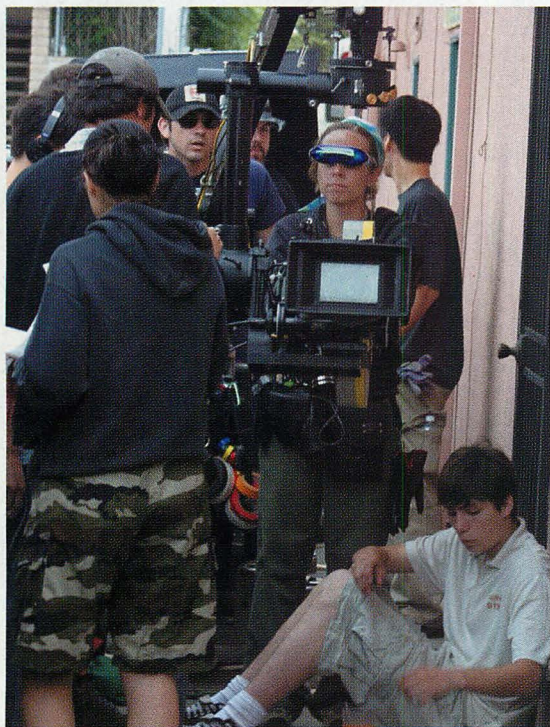


extremely helpful when Lisa came up with that idea."

Throughout production, Zuber was impressed with Wiegand's ability to produce high-quality work on a tight shooting schedule. "We were looking for a cinematographer who could make the frame look great and could make the lighting look great, but we also needed someone who was used to working with an independent budget," he says. "Besides being very talented, Lisa really came through for us by working within our time and budget constraints."

Since earning an MFA from UCLA in 1998 and the ASC's Karl Struss Heritage Award for Cinematography, Wiegand has shot several 35mm and high-definition features, including *Eastside*, *Dean Quixote*, *Fish in a Barrel*, *Outta Time* (a.k.a. *The Courier*; see AC Dec. '01), *Scrambled*, *Totally Sexy Loser* and *Cherry Bomb*. She credits first AC John Orphan and her "incredibly energetic" gaffer Eric Boland with helping her move quickly on a tight schedule. "I didn't come up through the ranks before becoming a cinematographer," she notes, "so I really rely on a strong crew."

During the *Little Athens* shoot, Wiegand supervised dailies indirectly by recording microcassettes delivered to Jeff Arden, the dailies colorist at Level 3. "Because Jeff was translating what I was doing into the digital realm, I tried to



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Michael (Ulrich Thomsen, right) reunites with his ne'er-do-well brother, Jannik (Nikolaj Lie Kaas), who has been released from prison, in *Brothers*, shot by Morten Søborg.

communicate with him as much as possible. Every day I made microcassettes about each of the scenes we shot, telling him what I thought he should do with them. I also had Jeff transfer everything full-frame because I wanted to have all of that image available for the new digital negative, in case we wanted to reposition any shots or do any effects during post."

Little Athens, a Legaci Pictures production that is currently being submitted to film festivals, wrapped principal photography in mid-June 2004. Last fall, Wiegand worked on the DI with Level 3 colorist Ron Nichols, creating the final look of the party scenes, fine-tuning the palette and conforming the framing to create a seamless 2:35:1 aspect ratio for both the Super 35 and Super 16 footage. Wiegand spent about 40 hours on the labor-intensive DI process. "I know some directors of photography feel they'll lose control in the post process if they can't be there for it," she says. "I'm lucky in a way, because I'm not shooting features back to back. When I shoot a feature, I have time to go through the post process with it."

Now that she's completed her first DI, Wiegand harbors no doubts about the value that the process can bring to a visually ambitious low-budget project. "It's such a great tool," she enthuses. "I feel fortunate to have used it on this project, because without it we wouldn't have been able to achieve the director's exact vision."

Instinctive Aesthetics

by Jon Silberg

The Danish film *Brothers*, which won the World Cinema Dramatic Audience Award at the recent Sundance Film Festival, tells an emotionally raw story that puts its characters through tortuous conflicts. A substantial portion of the film's power comes from the immediacy of the performances, which director Susanne Bier encouraged by giving the actors tremendous freedom of movement. This method of working provided director of



photography Morten Søborg with a set of exciting and difficult challenges.

A product of Zentropa Entertainment, the company responsible for such Dogme 95 films as Lars von Trier's *The Idiots*, *Brothers* is technically not a Dogme film. (Søborg used supplemental lighting, the soundtrack contains music and effects, and the film was color-corrected before film-out.) Nevertheless, it was designed to have the immediacy and intensity that audiences have come to associate with Dogme projects. Bier first became fascinated with the look and feel of that style — and its goal of using the camera to dig deeply into the characters' psychologies — when she applied it to her previous film, *Open Hearts*, which did follow Dogme rules.

In *Brothers*, we meet the upstanding soldier Michael (Ulrich Thomsen) as he visits a prison to pick up his ne'er-do-well brother Jannik (Nikolaj Lie Kaas), who has just completed his sentence. Jannik's presence around the family and Michael's wife, Sarah (Connie Nielsen), is fraught with tension. When Michael's reserve unit leaves for a mission in Afghanistan, his helicopter is shot down. Michael's apparent demise devastates Jannik and Sarah, but passions ensue, and the situation escalates in a number of ways — some fairly easy to foresee

and others rather shocking.

Brothers is Søborg's third collaboration with Bier. The two had previously worked together on a Swedish comedy done in a more traditional style, but with *Open Hearts* they established a work method and visual approach that they also brought to *Brothers*. "I think the Dogme method of shooting did something to Susanne," says the cinematographer. "It was like she realized, 'Wow! It's much more interesting to make movies about real people and feelings.'"

Bier offers, "I really enjoy working with a handheld camera. I had done a documentary and some commercials that way, but not a feature. When I realized the immense freedom that approach gave actors in terms of their movements and the pace, I found it very stimulating and satisfying."

Søborg shot *Open Hearts* in PAL DigiBeta, but on *Brothers*, he upgraded to a Sony HDC-F950 24p HDCam. Everything was handheld and spontaneous, and takes were generally 5-10 minutes long. Bier rarely, if ever, staged just a pickup or insert shot.

There is no studio work at all in *Brothers*, so location choice was essential to the success of a scene. "With our approach, it is very important that the whole setting can be used," Søborg

Photos courtesy of Zentropa Entertainment.

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Right: Sarah (Connie Nielsen) hears that her husband Michael's reserve unit is being deployed to Afghanistan. Below: Michael must say goodbye.



explains. "We need to be able to use the interior and the exterior; the rooms have to be right; and the connections from room to room must also be right, because we never know how a scene is going to develop in advance." Once the locations are set, he adds, "we go there to shoot and don't make any plans at all. We meet with the actors an hour or so before the rest of the team arrives, and Susanne encourages them to try everything."

"The actors have *carte blanche* to move anywhere," Bier confirms. "Their choices might not always work and I might take them back to another way of doing it, but good actors have wonderful intuition and I appreciate

immensely all the input that they bring to the set."

Søborg explains, "It's very much up to the actors if they want to stand or sit or walk over to the wall. We could have a scene scheduled to shoot in the kitchen, and then the actors might decide to walk into the bathroom. If they leave the room or walk outside, I am right there with my camera, following them wherever they go.

"I come from a documentary background, and maybe that's why I've been chosen for a lot of these kinds of projects," he adds. "I'm very much into shooting handheld, and I really like to be able to use the camera to react to some emotion the character has — I can

maybe go a little closer or just move slightly from one side [of a face] to the other."

Just as he cannot know in advance what the actors will do, the actors are generally in the dark about what to expect from him. "They're never sure where I'm going to point the camera," Søborg says of the people in front of the lens. "They can never relax. It's never, 'Now we're doing her close-up, so the other guy who's reading the lines can just relax.' No — they have to act all the time. If I hear something interesting behind me, I will *whoosh* around and put the camera on the other person. I see that as the most important thing that I do: investigating the action with the camera."

"Traditionally," says Bier, "it's been the lighting that has defined great camerawork, but in this kind of movie it's the framing. It's about having that intuitive knowledge that an actor's going to move his head a little bit on *this* line. When you watch Morten shooting a scene, it's like choreography. He is moving according to the actor's movements, just like a dancer."

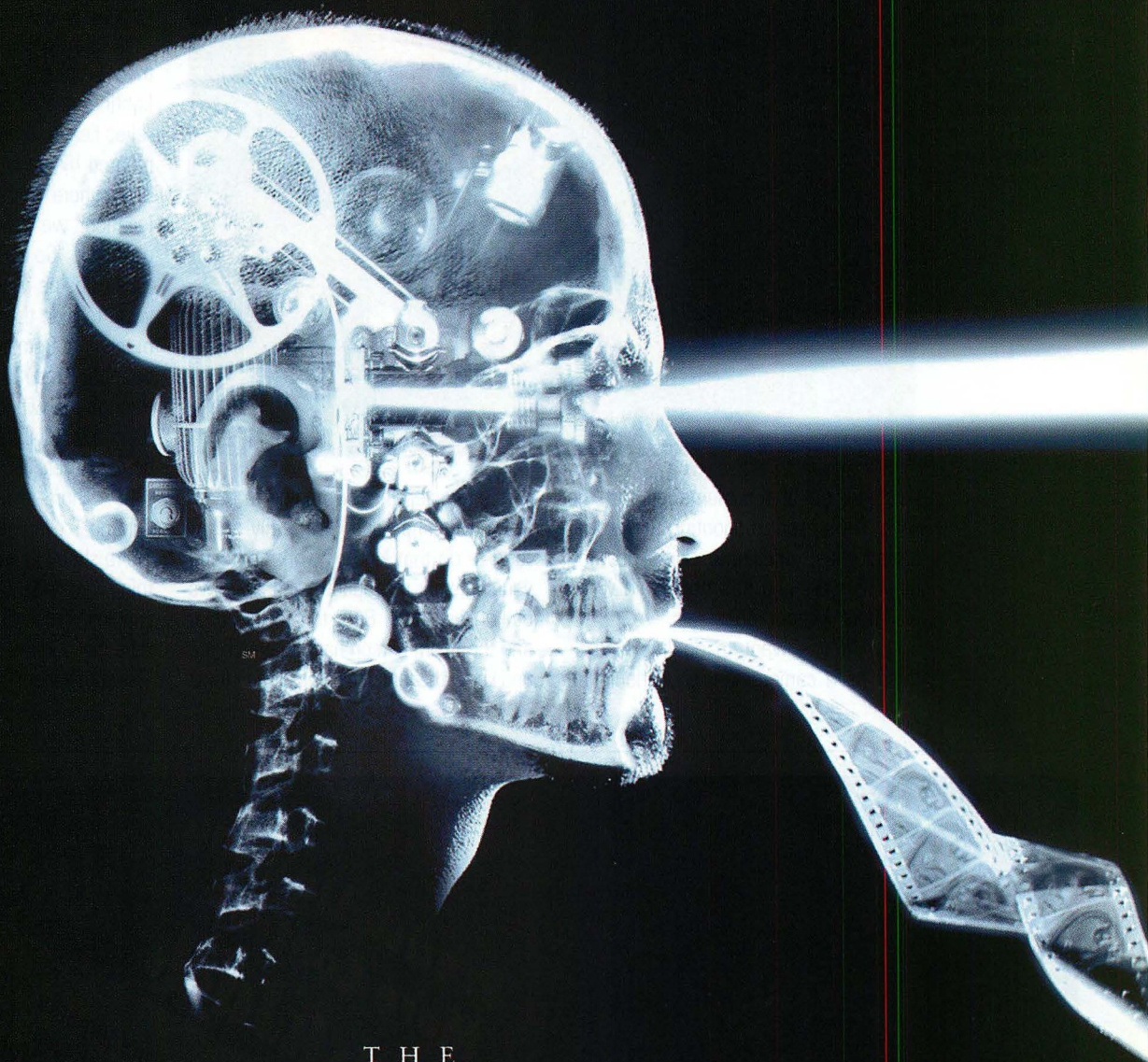
Obviously, shooting 360° in a set has its limitations. The crew on set consists only of Søborg, a first AC to pull focus and the boom operator. A down-converted standard-definition video signal is sent remotely to a monitor in another room, so Bier and the script supervisor can observe.

"I have this 'ninja' trick," adds Søborg. "We all wear black clothes every day, and we are always ready to cover up completely in black. If you're dressed in black and the camera is covered in black, it's less likely you'll show up as a reflection in a window or something. It's also a psychological thing with the actors, because we are sometimes very close to them when they are doing very intimate things, and the black clothes help make us very anonymous. They soon forget we're there."

In order to maximize this kind of freedom, Søborg stresses the value of an extremely good focus puller. "On *Brothers*, I chose Michael Rosenløv, who I've worked with on six movies, because



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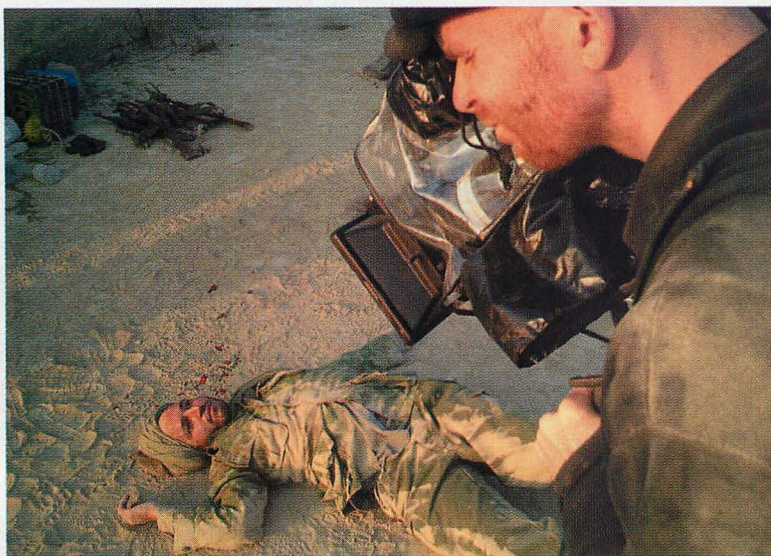
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Søberg, who used a Sony HDC-F950 camera, captures the carnage after Michael's helicopter is shot down in Afghanistan.



he comes out of documentaries, too," he says. "He's used to shooting things that happen just one time. He's not the nervous type, and he's not afraid when we shoot without rehearsals.

"If you want to do this kind of thing as a cameraman, you should be

very interested in who's going to boom the movie," he adds. "It's really an art form to do that kind of work and keep yourself, your microphone and shadows out of the shots. Both the focus puller and the boom person have to watch me and know the lens I'm using. I don't think

we had any microphone shadows in *Brothers* at all. We also used a lot of remote microphones."

Obviously, this freedom of movement prohibits the creation of elaborate lighting setups. For interiors, Søberg relies heavily on practical lamps supplemented by loose Kino Flo tubes hidden somewhere in the room. "Normally on location, we have limited space," he observes. "So it's all about gaffer-taping tubes on the wall, adding some black wrap to hide them and getting the rest of the light from practical lamps that can be in the shot. If I want sunlight coming through the windows. I might bring in a 6K or 12K HMI from outside, but I don't do that often."

There is no special "Hollywood lighting," even for tight close-ups. "If we're shooting a dinner scene or something like that, I might place a lot of candles on the table in order to create reflections in the actors' eyes," he says. "To supplement the candles, I'll use a

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micro Kino Flo tube placed right over the lens and ND it way down. I can turn it on and off during a shot if I need it just to get reflections in eyes. Otherwise, the lighting is the same for a close-up as it is for a wide shot."

Day exteriors are generally lit by the sun, sometimes with a little augmentation from a handheld reflector plate. "We need the freedom to be able to look everywhere the actors might choose to go," he says.

Søborg greatly prefers the 24p HD format to DigiBeta (PAL), which he used on *Open Hearts*. He appreciates HDCam format's ability to see deeply into shadows, though the F-950 camera itself did not impress him. "The camera is just not made for fiction filmmaking," he says. "It's noisy and the balance is bad."

Søborg used the Canon 5-50mm HD zoom at the wide end for a master and tighter for closer shots, but he never zoomed within a take. The aperture was

always wide open.

Throughout the shoot, he boosted the camera's gain to a level between +6 and +9 dB, even for day exteriors, though that required adding on four or more stops of ND in front of the lens. "I did some tests and found out that I liked the grain that the gain adds better than the straight image [at 0 dB]."

Bier elaborates, "Even in a very realistic movie like this one, I think there is still some kind of unspoken poetic level to a dramatic film, and if it's too much like reality television, you lose that element. It's about having a language within the reality that helps add a feeling. I think what Morten did with the gain helps with that language."

Aside from the ND filtration that the cinematographer employed frequently — he always wanted to shoot at maximum aperture to limit the depth of field — the only other filters he used were some light strengths of Tiffen Soft/FX, which he used for day interiors

to lend burned-out windows a slightly softer feel.

Editing, tape-to-tape color correction and the eventual Arrilaser film-out were all done at Zentropa's facility. "It's very nice having everything right there," says Søborg. "You get to know the guy who's going to color your footage, because you deal with him on a day-to-day basis. Everything is set up very well at Zentropa."

Though Søborg shoots many different kinds of shows, he says that the more free-form style of these past two films with Bier is as exhilarating for him as it is for the director and actors. He loves not knowing in advance what the actors will do. "That's why I want to do these types of films," he maintains. "I love it when the actors surprise me. Wherever they go, I know I have the freedom to follow." ■

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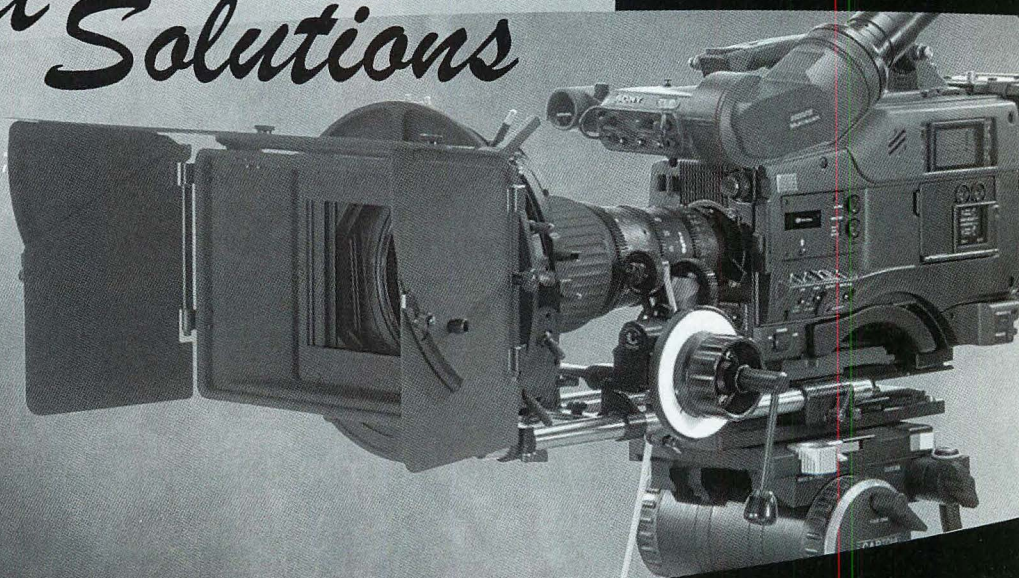
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Global Intrigue



The Interpreter, an urban thriller photographed by Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC, becomes the first feature production to shoot in United Nations headquarters.

by Patricia Thomson

Unit photography by Phil Bray, SMPSP
Additional photos by Craig Haagensen



In *The Interpreter*, Secret Service agents Keller and Woods (Sean Penn and Catherine Keener, opposite page) are called to protect United Nations interpreter Sylvia Broome (Nicole Kidman, left) after she overhears a plot to assassinate an African politician. Below: Keller becomes increasingly suspicious of Sylvia as he learns more about her background.

In the winter of 2004, an unprecedented act of diplomacy took place in the office of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, but this time, it wasn't the Noble Peace Prize winner who was mustering his powers of persuasion — it was director Sydney Pollack.

Pollack sought permission to film his new project, *The Interpreter*, on U.N. premises. No movie had ever been shot there, not even Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*.

Pollack was aware that the U.N. is not supposed to be used for commercial activity of any kind, and by most counts, a Hollywood film is as commercial as it gets. But he believed *The Interpreter* was the right film to break precedent. "The U.N. has got far more important things to do than to worry about movies," the director notes wryly. "I was very careful not to try to sell Mr. Annan. I just wanted to tell him about the film, and I assured him that there was nothing in it that would be embarrassing for the U.N., and that my sympathies were with the spirit of the U.N." By the end of the 30-minute meeting, Annan gave the green light.

Certainly, few could dispute

Pollack's credentials as a director of thrillers with contemporary, relevant themes — he helped define the genre with pictures such as *Three Days of the Condor* and *The Firm*. To bring *The Interpreter* to the screen, Pollack tapped Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC, a director of photography with his own distinguished record in the suspense genre (*Seven*, *Alien: Resurrection*, *The Ninth Gate*, *Panic Room*) whose diversity had long impressed him. "I saw [that Darius]

was capable of a very wide range of work, all the way from the super-stylized photography of *Evita* [see AC Jan. '97] to much grittier stuff, like *Seven* [AC Oct. '95], and that range was interesting to me," says Pollack. "I wanted *The Interpreter* to have a base in absolute reality, but heighten it slightly. I wanted something more beautiful, more vivid than documentary reality."

For his part, Khondji was delighted to have an opportunity to



Global Intrigue

Unnerved by a series of threats, Sylvia hurries home to her apartment in the Village.



work with Pollack. "When it comes to storytelling, Sydney works like a journalist," he says. "There was something very real about what he wanted for the film, and to me, that's more exciting than the influence of painters or photographers."

The Interpreter opens with Sylvia Broome (Nicole Kidman), an African-born interpreter, translating in the U.N.'s General Assembly. She later returns after business hours to retrieve her forgotten purse and hears voices coming through the headset. Flipping on the light and donning the headset, she realizes she is eavesdropping on a plot to assassinate the leader of her African homeland during his upcoming address to the U.N. She tries to turn off the light in the booth before it flickers all the way on, but it's too late — she is plainly visible to the plotters on the dark General Assembly floor. Enter Tobin Keller (Sean Penn), a Secret Service agent assigned to protect Broome from the would-be assassins. As he investigates the matter, however, Keller begins to suspect that his ward knows more than she's admitting, and that she might have her own agenda with regard to the African president and rebel groups.

Like *Three Days of the Condor*, in which Robert Redford plays a New York-based CIA agent who stumbles across a rogue group within the spy agency, *The Interpreter* takes full advantage of New York City's inimitable skyline, landmarks and urban pulse. Although filming in the U.N. was a big question mark at the outset, the filmmakers always planned to do extensive shooting in the city; the story involves surreptitious meetings in city parks, scenes around Sylvia's Greenwich Village apartment, a suspenseful chase through the streets of Manhattan, and a bus explosion in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Crown Heights.

As Pollack began working his way up the ladder toward Annan, construction got underway on a partial re-creation of the General Assembly room at a soundstage in Toronto. (The plan was to add the room's domed ceiling as a CG set extension.) This was to be supplemented by a dozen Toronto locations that would act as stand-ins for the U.N.'s neighborhood. "We examined possibilities around the world, and Toronto had some architecture that was the closest," says executive producer G. Mac Brown. "But

honestly, if the U.N. had said no, we were never very clear on what we could do to sell [audiences] another way. We had some ridiculous notions about building the General Assembly at three-quarter scale, finding buildings, and doing visual effects out of windows. I don't think we could have done it, but we were certainly trying."

When Annan's permission came through, the team heaved a collective sigh of relief. For Khondji, the advantages of shooting inside the U.N. were numerous. "I was so inspired by its architecture," he says. "The place is just unbelievable. The building is very, very strong — it *sweats* ambience. Our production designer, Jon Hutman, was really good, and I would've trusted him to build that set, but it would never have been the same as shooting in the real place. The grit of the natural daylight coming in, the practical lights, the feeling and patina of the real place are things you cannot redo on a set. It's a direct line of juice you get from the soul of the place."

However, filming at the location also had its disadvantages. The U.N.'s rules, which were strengthened considerably after the September 2001 terrorist attacks,



To film a scene in which Sylvia converses with Keller, who is surveilling her from the apartment across the street, the production re-created the top three floors of both buildings onstage at the Bedford Avenue Armory in Brooklyn. Pictured are Sylvia's building and the 5K Skypans that will supply the ambient city light filtering into her home.

were non-negotiable: every piece of equipment taken into the building had to be sniffed by dogs, the production had to be able to evacuate with three hours' notice, the filmmakers could not hang lights or touch walls in key areas, and filming could only take place on weekends. The latter stipulation "was the biggest chore of all," says Brown. "At 6 o'clock on Monday morning, it had to appear as though we'd never been there. I've been told that we used more lights in the U.N. lobby than had been used on any one location in New York City before. It's one thing to do that, and it's another thing to do it over a weekend with no pre-rigging and no wrap time!"

There was also the matter of the building's sheer size, which complicated the moving of equip-

ment. Four trucks loaded with grip and lighting gear were in the U.N.'s underground parking garage five blocks away, but that distance proved impractical for both hauling equipment through the connected buildings and transporting it with a smaller stake-bed truck. Instead, every Friday night those trucks would unload and go through the dog search at a certain time. But fetching anything extra was "an interesting process," says key grip Mitch Lillian. "We'd come in at 6 a.m., and everything that had been used on other locations during the week — cameras, dollies and extra grip gear — would have to be sniffed going through the gate. If we needed anything additional from the truck, we'd radio the guy stationed there, and he would bring

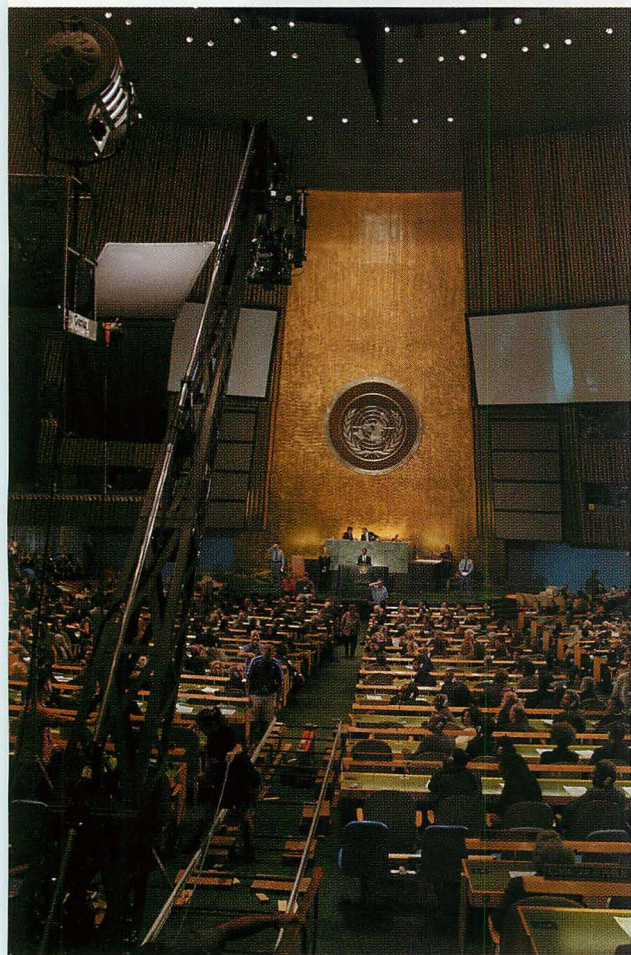
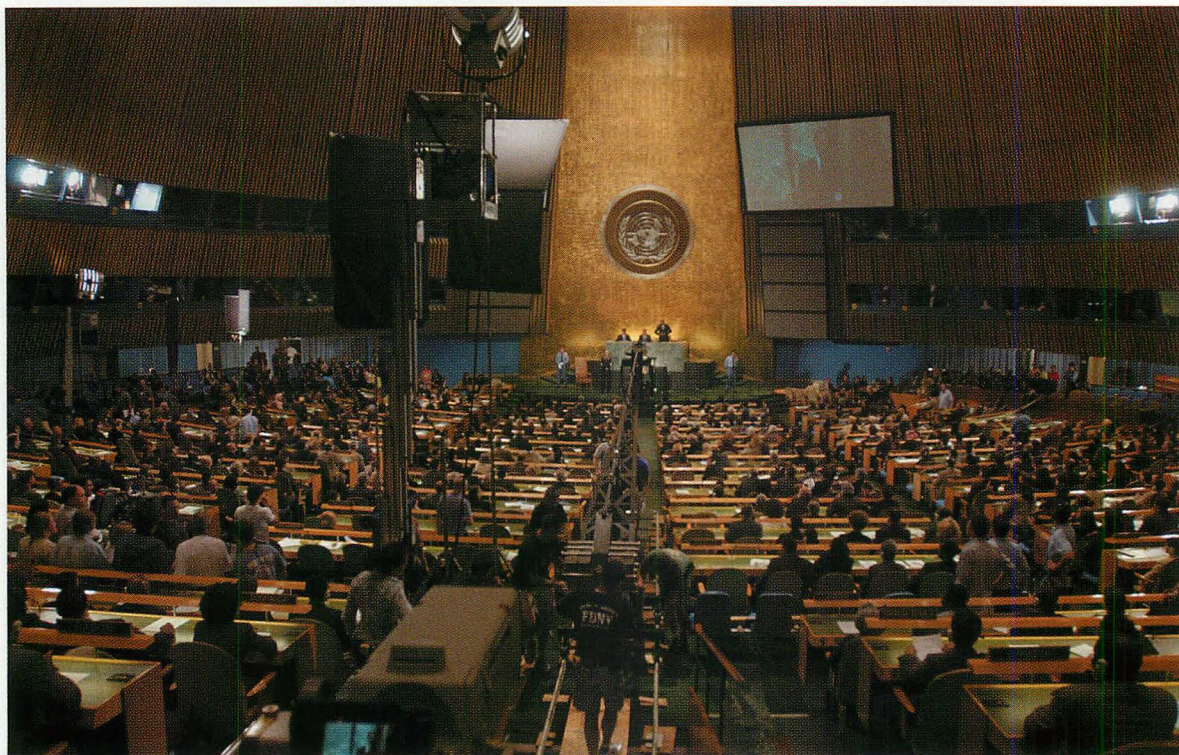
it to the gate while somebody on our side would walk to the gate [to fetch it]. The challenge was that the U.N. stretches from 43rd Street to 49th Street, so you could conceivably have a six-block walk."

Khondji notes that Lillian and gaffer John De Blau made invaluable contributions throughout the unusual shoot. "Mitch and John gave me excellent advice every step of the way," he says. "And my focus puller, Erik Swanek, and his crew of camera assistants were also great collaborators."

The production's Arriflex camera package, rented from New York's Camera Service Center, comprised Arricam Studios, 435s and 35-3s, and several sets of Cooke anamorphic lenses specially shipped from Technovision Paris and Joe Dunton Company (JDC) in London.

Global Intrigue

The crew carried Giraffe and Arrow cranes throughout the shoot at the U.N. for instances such as these, when they wanted to reach out over seats in the General Assembly room.



"I shot *Evita* and two other movies with Cooke anamorphic lenses, and I love the look of them," says the cinematographer. "They're not quite as sharp as all the other anamorphic lenses and they have a very special quality. To me, the image they render looks the way an anamorphic image should look, with a shallow depth of field, a very round image, and very beautiful close-ups. Sometimes it's almost a deformation of reality, bigger than life."

Khondji adds that he also wanted the widescreen format to evoke American thrillers from the Seventies such as *Klute*, *All the President's Men*, *Serpico* and, most of all, *Three Days of the Condor*, a key source of inspiration. Anamorphic's shallow depth of field could effectively create a sense of claustrophobia and offer both emotional intensity and an epic feel. "I didn't want to create a nostalgic look," he notes. "I wanted to make a modern film, but I wanted it to be more analog than digital. We cinematographers lose something by always going toward sharpness, toward

perfection, depth of field, anti-halo, anti-flare, anti-this, anti-that. We lose a certain soul we used to have."

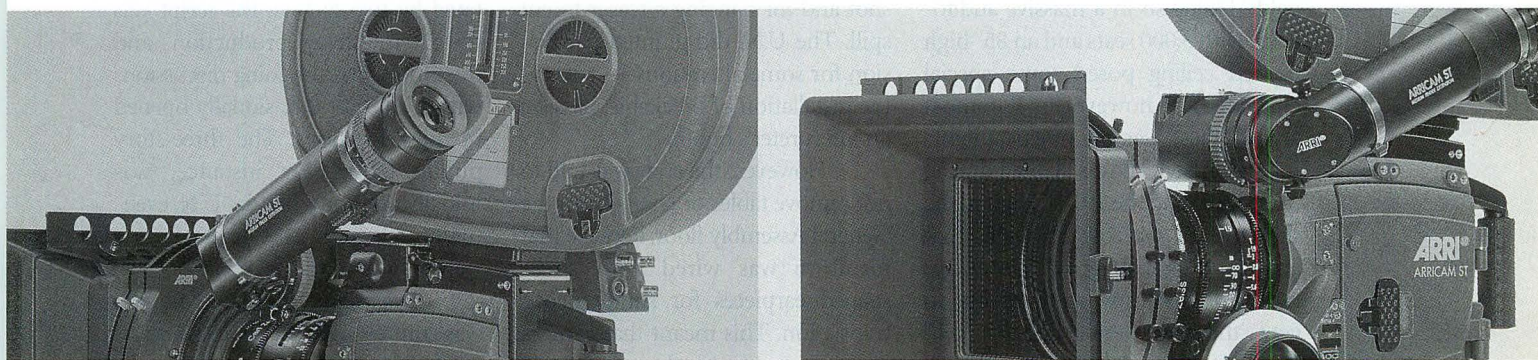
Still, Khondji did use two of Kodak's newer film stocks on the picture. "We were the first to use Vision2 Expression 500T 5229 [on a feature]," he says. "It has a low contrast ratio and a very mild curve of contrast on the negative." He filmed New York day exteriors on Vision2 100T 5212.


Among the show's interiors, the General Assembly was the most important location. That is where Broome overhears the assassination plot, and where she later reenacts it for security agents. The famous room also serves as the setting where Broome and Keller have several key discussions, and where agents race to thwart the assassination plot at the film's climax.

With its green-marble podium and gold-leaf backdrop, the General Assembly offers significant aesthetic appeal. "The room's lighting is interesting because of the dark wood, the gold background and the dark-blue walls," says Khondji. "We just made it

THE INTERPRETER FILMED WITH THE ARRICAM SYSTEM

Darius Khondji ASC, AFC



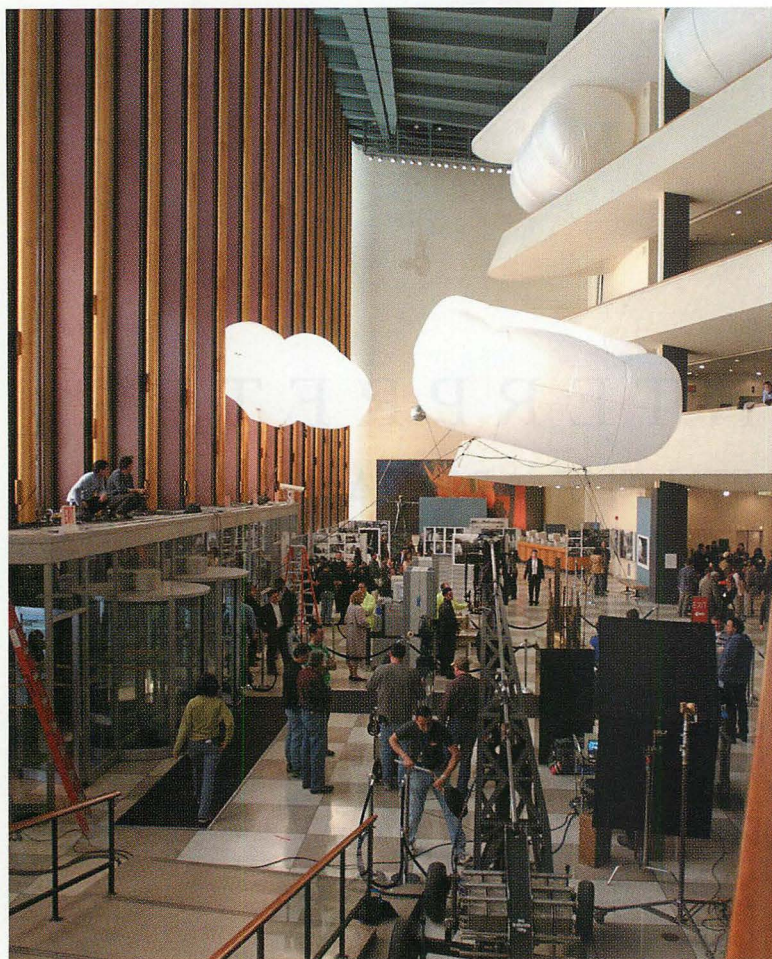
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A series of balloon lights provides top fill inside the U.N. lobby.



more interesting by enhancing it. I increased the contrast by turning off some lights, and I highlighted the gold." Doing so in a massive auditorium with 3,000 seats and an 85'-high domed ceiling posed some special challenges, however. Foremost among these was the practical lighting system, which was created during a renovation in the 1970s. High in the dome is a narrow catwalk that accesses a lighting grid. "They have hundreds of lamps up there, but to get to them, we literally had to crawl," recalls De Blau. Adds Lillian, "It was *really* challenging to get out there. Anyone who weighed more than 170 pounds had a really hard time squeezing through the crack."

But squeeze they did, and the crew hung nearly 60 Par cans between the existing units that stayed up for the duration of the shoot. Another semi-permanent fixture

during the shoot was the filmmakers' truss rig on chain motors, which was used to facilitate a dramatic overhead shot and for hanging a teaser to cut spill. The U.N. did grant permission for some alterations — such as the installation of breakable glass on an interpreter's booth.

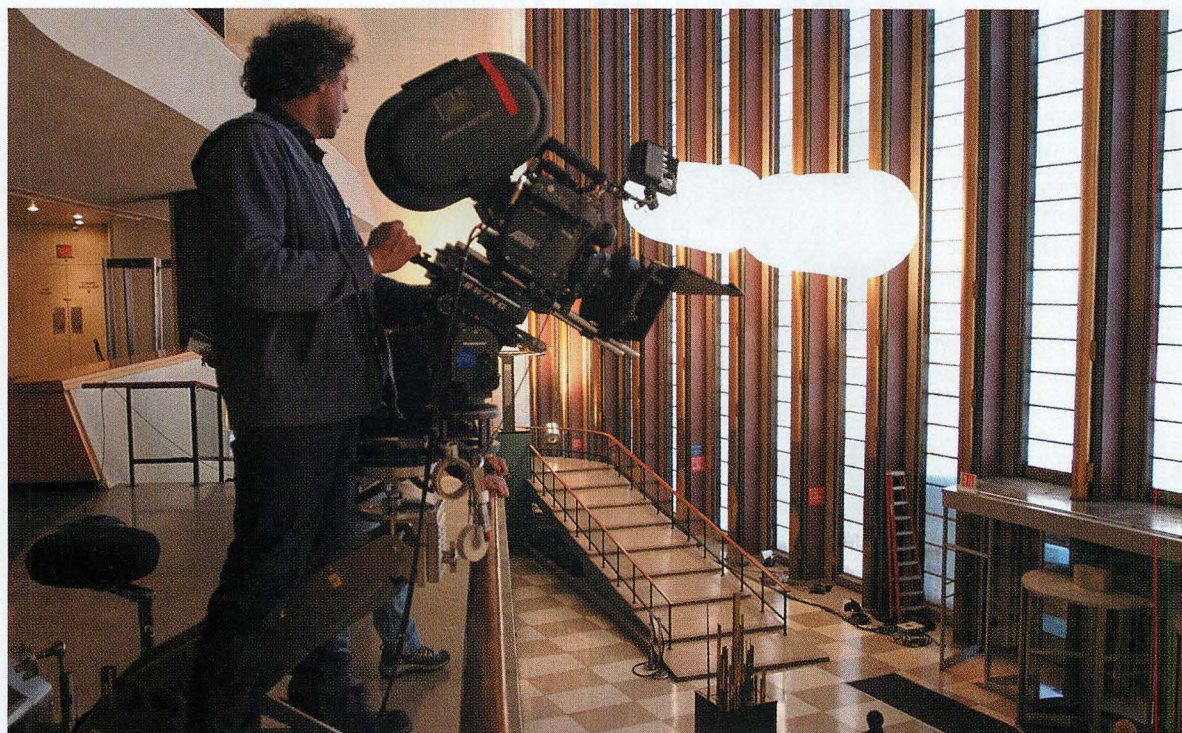
However, the crew was told to not remove tables or chairs from the General Assembly floor, because that furniture was wired with shell-shaped earpieces for simultaneous translation. This meant that camera movement was mostly restricted to dollies or tracks on the room's sloping aisles, or laterally across the front and back. In spite of these restrictions, the filmmakers were uniformly impressed by the U.N. staff's attitude. "They were amazingly cooperative," says Lillian. "At first, we thought we couldn't do anything, but by the end of the job, we had a

zillion lights. Every time we moved in there, we'd bring in a Giraffe crane and an Arrow crane. We didn't use them that much, but we had them on hand just in case we had to reach out over seats or up to the interpreter's booth."

Four 20Ks on the main balcony and some Par cans were responsible for lighting the shimmering, gold-leaf backdrop. Additional 5Ks, 10Ks, and 20Ks were positioned in the windowless booths above the interpreter booths, while 20Ks were stationed atop two Genie lifts to light the podium and provide edgelight in Broome's practical interpreter booth. (To facilitate frontal views and close-ups, the booth was also rebuilt on stage at Brooklyn's Marcy Avenue Armory.) Kino Flos gelled with ¼ Green were hidden around the assembly floor and inside translator booths to generate a blue uplight; some of the fluorescent units were also placed on the curved delegate tables, where they replaced old, handmade cathode tubes.

Overall, working in the U.N. "required rigging for flexibility," says Lillian. "We couldn't lock ourselves into a situation." This was necessitated by two factors: the script was rewritten during production, and the filmmakers' ongoing discussions with U.N. staff occasionally opened up new locations. The three-story public lobby, for instance, was initially off limits, but the U.N. eventually relented, and some scenes were moved to this location.

Everyone, especially Khondji, was smitten with the lobby's natural light. For an hour or two in the morning, the sunrise transformed the space, whose entire north wall is made of thick, translucent glass. "When the sun hits that glass, it's absolutely fabulous," says Khondji. "It's a beautiful, special, slightly golden light." To keep the light level consistent over long hours of shooting, the crew positioned five scissor-



Director of photography Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC lines up a shot in the grand lobby.

lifts carrying three stands of 12-light or 24-light Dinos each outside the glass wall. That illumination was supplemented inside by helium balloons for top fill, and HMI Pars and 18Ks on the upper balcony aimed into an Ultra Bounce on a traveler system.

In addition, the art department used and replicated existing columns in the lobby and elsewhere that long ago had held cathode tubes as a design element. "The tubes had been gone for years," says De Blau, "but the columns were still there and the old reflectors for the tubes still existed. We put fluorescents behind all of those and wired them in, so we went back to more of a period look."

As in the General Assembly room, camera movement in the lobby was accomplished mostly with tracks or dollies. "There's a lot of movement, but they're very subtle moves," says Khondji. "The moves were often generated by Sydney. He would ask for my advice, but he also liked to have a say in positioning the camera, and he's done many more anamorphic films than any director I know. He's the director who has the

best feel for and the most knowledge of anamorphic staging. If *The Interpreter* is fluid and smartly thought-out, that's Sydney Pollack.

"I encouraged Sydney to do long scenes with shot and reverse, just observing the actors," continues Khondji. "It's very classic: a wide shot, an over-the-shoulder, a tighter shot, and sometimes a very tight close-up." This approach stemmed from watching Penn and Kidman in action. "When Sean was acting, I sometimes felt the way a cinematographer probably felt having Marlon Brando, in his greatest days, in front of the camera, or sometimes Robert Mitchum. Sean's face has so much character. It's like the different light of the day, like clouds and sun in a landscape. And Nicole was absolutely haunted by her character. It was just amazing to watch. Why try to find clever camera angles when you have actors like that? Just put the camera there and record, like you're going to film an anthropology study. I went in with a lot of ideas about remote angles and so forth, each one more clever than the last, but ultimately, I cleaned everything off."

Khondji's love of actors was evident in his attention to lighting, says Pollack. "Darius has the ability to work very tight with faces, and a lot of cinematographers don't. They can be very good with movement, but they don't want to take the time to really model a face; they consider it slick, in a way. But Darius was extremely careful with Sean and Nicole and took the time to do that. The films I do are character-driven, so it's important to take some time with [actors]."

One of Khondji's favorite sets to light was Sylvia's East Village apartment, which Secret Service agents surveil from an apartment directly across the street. At a critical point in the film, Sylvia realizes she is being watched and calls Agent Teller. Peering out from her darkened apartment, she watches Teller watching her. To accomplish the scene, the production built the top three floors of both building exteriors on stage at the Bedford Avenue Armory in Brooklyn. "The scene was very complicated to do," says Khondji. "We built a platform with tracks, and we tracked toward Sean — wide

Khondji Enters the DI Suite

Khondji carried out his first digital intermediate on *The Interpreter* and had to complete the work in a scant 11 days.

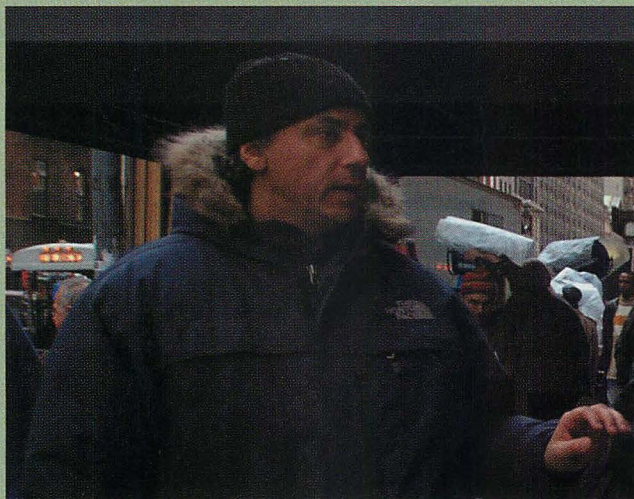
The *Interpreter* is the first movie on which Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC was able to supervise a digital intermediate (DI). The work was carried out at EFilm, where Khondji collaborated with digital colorist Steve Scott. The footage, scanned at 4K on an Imagica XE scanner, was proxied down to 1K for work in the color-correction room and projected on a Barco 2K projector. Scott used EFilm's proprietary software-based

system to do the color correction. After color and dust-busting data were applied, the files were recorded out to negative at 2K using an Arrilaser and then printed at Technicolor.

Khondji's goal with the DI was to keep all of the adjustments as subtle as possible. "Mostly, we aimed to translate the natural look of the film," he says. "It's not an 'effects' DI, where we're changing everything." The cinematographer says he has perceived many movies that were finished digitally to be "over-DI'd," with too much saturation, contrast and painting.

Khondji and Scott's goal was to use the DI to supplement the cinematography in unobtrusive ways, such as adding slight vignettes or gradients, or enhancing the contrast between very dark locations and very light ones. "In the old days, you had to do absolutely everything in camera, which is a great thing to do," says Khondji. "But in the mix of modern production, you don't have the time to add all of those things when you shoot." In the DI suite, "you can emphasize one color that no filters can produce. You can touch up one color or one thing. You can manipulate or push the audience to see something or not see something."

For Khondji, the biggest disadvantage of the DI process on *The Interpreter* was the schedule — the



work had to be completed in 11 days. "The film is long and complex, and I feel we needed two more weeks to do the DI," says the cinematographer. "I was lucky to work with Steve Scott, considering the time challenge we had."

Khondji says Scott constantly protected him from clipping the whites or going too inky in the blacks. It is in these extremes of the exposure curve, he explains, where a DI can begin to look overly processed. "When I met Steve, I said, 'Please don't let me go into video effects on *anything*. I don't want to see any artifacts from over-contrast, or any whites becoming video-like. Keep us in the film world! Keep us in the film world!' And right from the beginning, Steve understood what I meant."

Initially, Khondji and director Sydney Pollack didn't think they would be able to finish *The Interpreter* with a DI. "Sydney was very interested in this process, and we both wanted to do it, but we thought we wouldn't have the time because the [original] release date was [early spring]. When the release date was pushed back, the producers and the studio agreed to give us the DI, which was an exciting thing."

During the shoot, of course, Khondji didn't know he would have access to the tools available in the DI suite. However, he always planned on doing a silver-retention process, such as

ENR, to finesse his blacks. He therefore shot the picture in a way that would preserve detail. "I always prepare the blacks — I fill a little bit more, or I add smoke, or I flash. On this film, I used Kodak [Vision2 Expression 500T] 5229, a softer negative stock that has a very flat curve of contrast, of gamma. That gave me the quality I wanted in post."

Khondji acknowledges that maintaining so much

detail in the blacks marks a shift for him. "When I was shooting *Delicatessen*, *City of Lost Children* and even *Seven*, I loved to make the blacks look like china ink, but recently I stepped back from that, and I love having a little flashing effect in the blacks. It's just my taste. I've noticed that everybody seems to be shooting a very contrasty negative, saturating the black. I'm just in a different world now."

Khondji notes that he wanted *The Interpreter* to resemble films from the 1970s in some respects. "The blacks were not as rich as they became in the '90s, and I like that. I love American thrillers from the '70s; every filmmaker in Europe is more or less in love with the look of the '70s American thriller. I've tried to re-create that classic style in this film, and I think Sydney was on the same track."

With his first DI behind him, Khondji says he wouldn't shoot any differently even if he knew a DI is a sure thing. "If you need to do masks or things like that, you need a bit of time to track, so you cannot just say 'We'll fix it in the DI' while you're in production, unless you have five weeks for the DI and a director who's familiar with the process. In the limited time we had at EFilm, it was good that we were aiming for a naturalistic image quality."

— Stephanie Argy



Left: When natural light began to fade, Dinos were used to re-create the daylight streaming into the U.N. lobby. Below: The greenscreen portion of a bus explosion was filmed onstage at the Hudson River Stages.

shot, then closer and closer to tight shot, and then over his shoulder to her. The progression of lighting in Sylvia's apartment was very precise; she had to turn off some light, but there would still be a bit of light coming from the bathroom. Sydney was very meticulous about what he wanted for the scene.

"I've always wanted to [re-create] street lights coming into an apartment at night," continues Khondji. "I started to explore that on a European film I photographed very early on. If there are a lot of lights around the neighborhood and you turn out the apartment lights, your eyes get used to the darkness, and you gradually feel the outside lights become very strong in their patterns, the light of the cars from down below, the moonlight. It's a classic film-noir feeling, and that's what I wanted to reproduce."

To conjure that look, the crew started by positioning a couple of small practicals in the bathroom to backlight Kidman. They draped heavy muslin across the ceiling and used small lamps on dimmers to enhance the feeling of light bouncing off the ceiling from outside. To

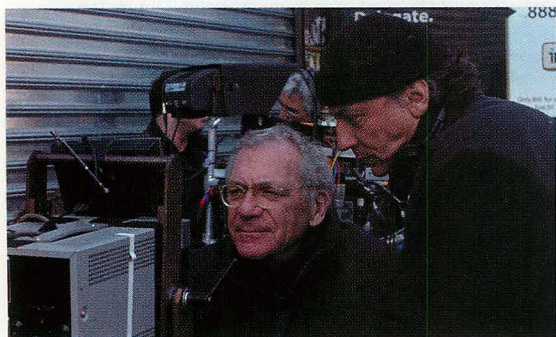
suggest ambient city light filtering into the apartment, the team placed three lightly diffused 5K Skypanns gelled with $\frac{1}{2}$ CTO, Apricot, or $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ Plus Green at the base of both buildings. At least one 20K with $\frac{1}{2}$ CTO and $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ Plus Green for a sodium vapor look was used to pick up part of the background building that hides the agents. As the camera moved in closer to Kidman's face, the actress was lit from within the room by a Kino Flo gelled with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ Plus Green placed at window level — just enough to echo the light outside. All

in all, says Khondji, "it was an exciting mood to create."

Although *The Interpreter* continues in the classic style of Pollack's earlier thrillers, it represents a new phase in the director's style, one emphasizing more active, handheld camerawork and high-speed dolly work interspersed with the formally framed sections. "I did one dolly shot in the General Assembly on track that was about 60 feet long," recalls camera operator Craig Haagensen. "Two guys pushed me [down the sloping



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Director Sydney Pollack and Khondji on location in New York.

aisle], and five guys stopped me — that's how fast I was going. I could feel my hair blowing!"

One sequence that features some handheld camerawork also involved greenscreen photography. It follows Broome onto a city bus, where she is confronted by someone from the rebel group. Secret Service agents trailing their respective charges also board the bus, which travels four or five stops during the verbal exchange. Meanwhile, suspicious that a bomb has been planted

on the vehicle, Teller phones a fellow agent and instructs him to get Broome off the bus. Shortly thereafter, the bus explodes in a ball of fire, killing the remaining agent and passengers.

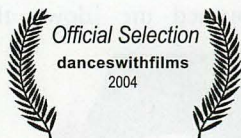
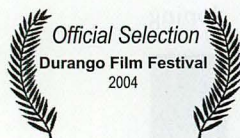
According to Khondji, the filmmakers' goal was to make the explosion "really real and very scary." In fact, during prep, they studied press photos of recent vehicle explosions in Iraq and Israel. "Honestly, I was a bit disturbed by the idea of blowing up a bus in New York," says Khondji. "I didn't like the idea, and I felt that way until I got into the technicalities of where to put the cameras, cast and crew safety, and so on."

After much deliberation, the team decided to use greenscreen for the action inside the bus. "We wanted to shoot two handheld cameras freely and not have to think about the changing of light outside," says Khondji. "Plus, we wanted to see

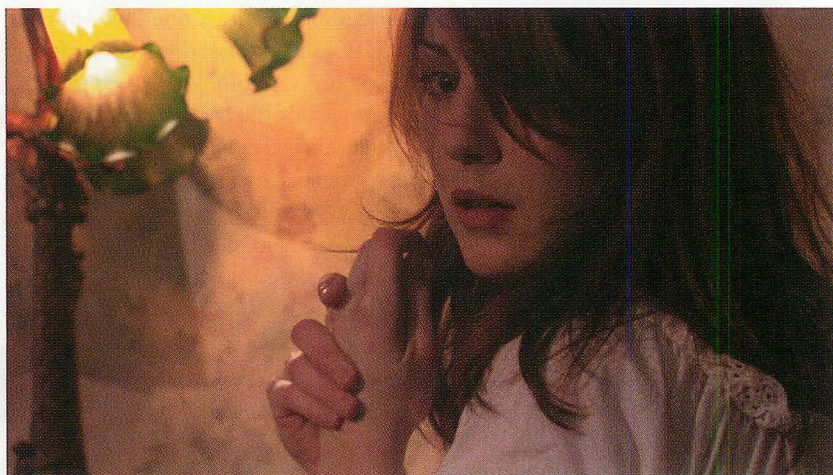
outside. Sydney was very nervous because he didn't know how it would come out. He's not an effects director." But Khondji, who has ample experience with greenscreen, considers the results "very credible work."

To capture the view outside the bus, a plate unit worked with three Arri 435s on an insert car, filming three overlapping plates of the Brooklyn streets. All of the action inside the bus was shot at the Hudson River Stages under the direction of visual-effects supervisor Jon Farhat. The greenscreen was U-shaped, and the bus was placed on a turntable-like swivel. De Blau and his crew built two long lightboxes that ran the length of the bus positioned 8' above, each containing about 20 2K open-bulb Nooks that were on separate dimmers "so we could control the light and make it travel along the box," says the gaffer.

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"We had smaller sources on the floor that we'd pan left and right or along the bus ceiling to create the sense of moving by a hot, sunny street, or to create a kick off a car." Kino Flos replaced the bus's practical ceiling lights, and two overhead hatches were added to let in exterior light. "It was easier to open a trap door than to rig up more lights," says De Blau.

To record the explosion coordinated by special-effects supervisor Bruce Steinheimer, the filmmakers positioned an Eyemo in a crashbox in front of the bus and seven Arri cameras, a mix of 435s and 35-3s, around the location — inside shops and cars, and even on the roof of the adjacent building. "It was a challenge to get the Strada crane onto the roof," says Lillian. The aging five-story tenement "had to be shored up throughout the floors, and then the rooftop had to be shored up. Then we used another crane to bring the

Strada up onto the roof, where it could be assembled."

At the eleventh hour, however, the crew hit some snags. The gas company discovered minor leaks in the vicinity, and although the leaks were fixed, the plan to flip a car had to be amended so that the car simply crashed into something. "We were going to do that with a cannon, which is basically a big piston that hits the ground," says Lillian. "But the gas company didn't want that percussion over the underground gas lines."

There was no greater contrast to these pyrotechnics than the velvety calm inside the U.N. Khondji keeps a memento of his days there close at hand: the screensaver on his computer is a photo he took from the production office on Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. It shows the U.N.'s glass tower catching the late-afternoon light, and the building is

radiant in a sea of silhouetted buildings. "That's the image I had of the U.N. in my mind," says Khondji. "It's an angelic, beautiful place in the middle of all this darkness in the world. I tried to push the contrast between good and evil in the film, and *that*," he says, gesturing to his screensaver, "was the image for me."

TECHNICAL SPECS

Anamorphic 2.40:1

Arricam Studio,
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Arri 35-3
Cooke lenses

Kodak
Vision2 Expression 500T 5229,
Vision2 100T 5212

Digital Intermediate
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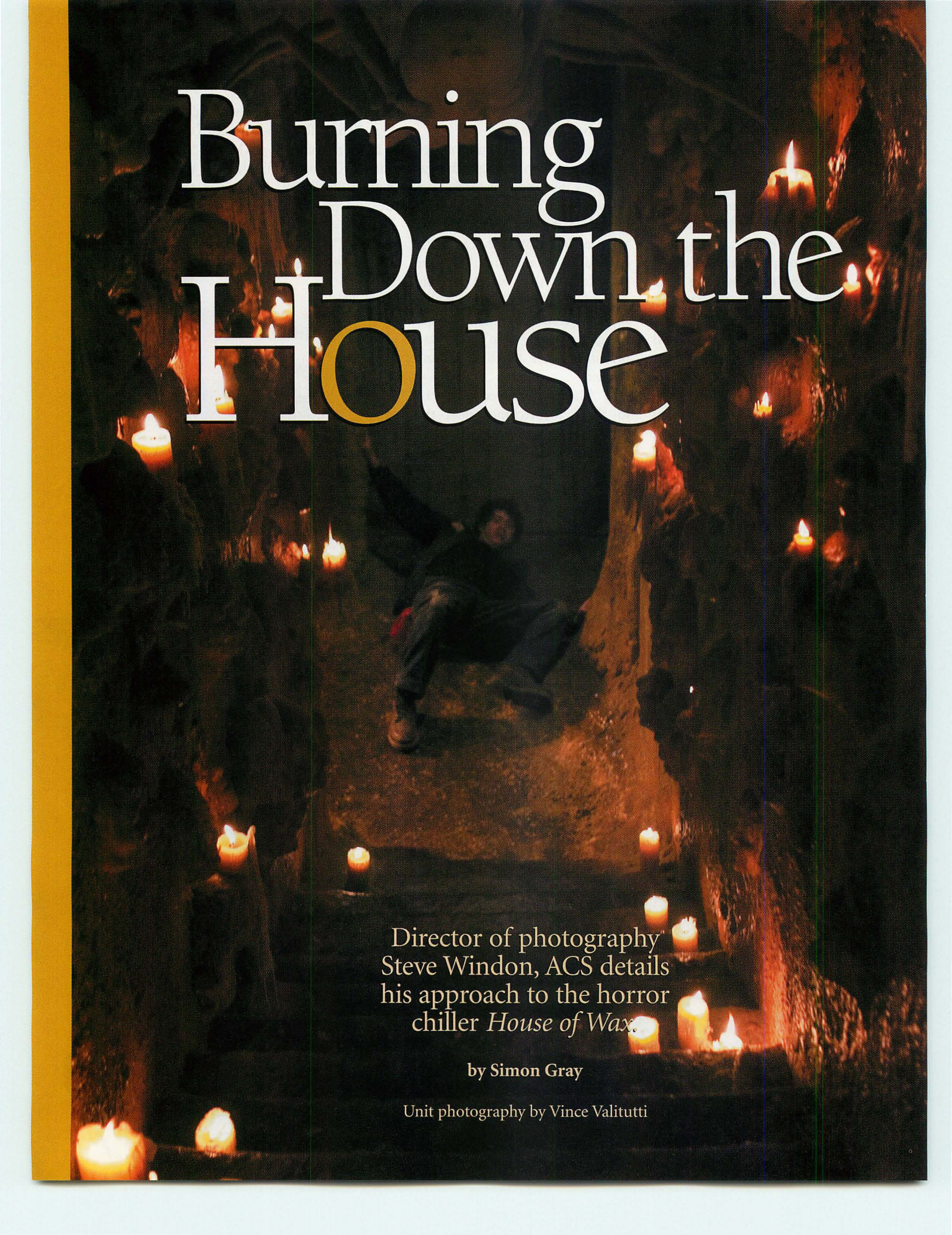


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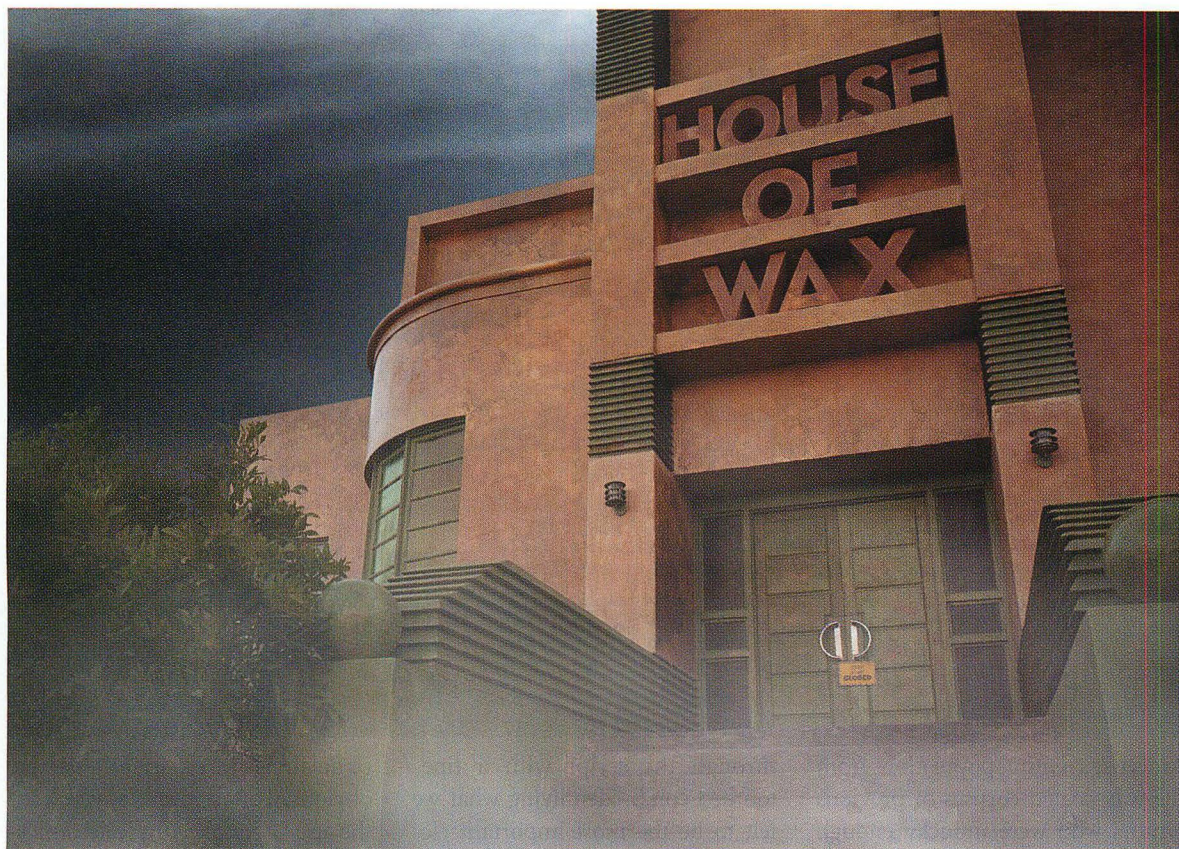
A person is seen from behind, standing in a dark, cavernous space. The walls and floor are covered in numerous lit candles, creating a warm, flickering light. The person is wearing dark clothing and is looking towards the center of the cave. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and eerie.

Burning Down the House

Director of photography
Steve Windon, ACS details
his approach to the horror
chiller *House of Wax*.

by Simon Gray

Unit photography by Vince Valitutti



Opposite: Dalton (Jon Abrahams) falls into a grisly trap in *House of Wax*. This page: The exterior set of the museum, along with the town of Ambrose, was built in Queensland, Australia, on a 10-acre expanse.

Prior to signing on for *House of Wax*, cinematographer Steve Windon, ACS had not worked with commercials director Jaume Collet-Serra, but he was immediately impressed by Collet-Serra's ideas for the project. "There were several aspects of *House of Wax* that attracted me: it's a fun and visually interesting script, and Jaume had terrific ideas about how he wanted to do the film," says Windon, whose feature credits include *The Postman*, *Firestorm* and *Deep Blue Sea*. "I've had quite a bit of experience working with first-time directors from commercial backgrounds, and I always find it a rewarding and exciting process because they're continuously coming up with great ideas. Also, with production designer Graham 'Grace' Walker [*Gothika*, *Ghost Ship*] and producer Joel Silver on board, I just knew this would be a great film to work on."

What Windon didn't antici-

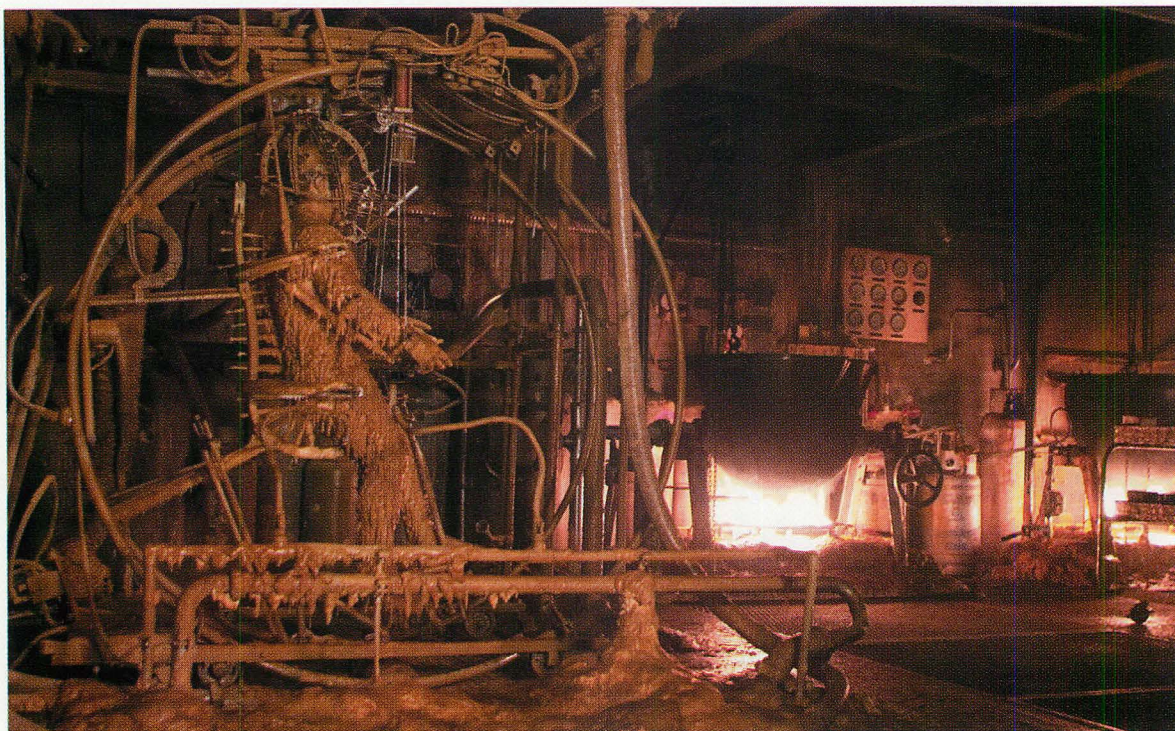
pate was the extent to which the project would call upon his technical and aesthetic capabilities. "I can't recall having ever shot a feature on which I was pushed as much by both a script and a director as *House of Wax*," he says with a laugh. "Jaume always wanted to go harder and further than anything either of us had done, which is, of course, what every cinematographer looks for in a director. He didn't want this to just be a dark film, he wanted it to be *really* dark. It wasn't uncommon for me to be running shots at night with little more than a cameo light over the top of the lens while working four to five stops underexposed [with Kodak Vision2 500T 5218] — and trying to get some extremely subtle detail in the background! I was often shooting dramatically underexposed faces against black backgrounds, and it was just a little touch of silver in the makeup providing the separation. *House of Wax* is definitely the darkest movie I've ever shot."

This *House of Wax* is not a literal remake of the 1953 film that starred the inimitable Vincent Price, but is, as Windon describes it, a "teenage-ized" version. "This film is quite different from the '53 film in both tone and plot," says the cinematographer. "It has a young, good-looking cast [led by Elisha Cuthbert and Chad Michael Murray], as well as a great soundtrack, and it belongs more in the horror/slasher genre of other Warner Bros./Castle Rock films such as *Ghost Ship* [see *AC* Sept. '02] and *House on Haunted Hill*."

The plot follows an ill-fated group of friends who are on their way to a college football game when, thanks to car trouble, they fall prey to the evil whims of a pair of disturbed twin brothers in the seemingly uninhabited small town of Ambrose. To their horror, the teens discover that the twins have expanded upon the town's main attraction, the House of Wax, by creating

Burning Down the House

Right: Wade (Jared Padalecki) gets waxed. Below: Bo (Brian Van Holt) wanders through a church filled with suspiciously pallid parishioners in the abandoned town of Ambrose.



Ambrose's entire population from the wax-coated corpses of previous visitors who were unlucky enough to stumble into town.

"Rather than using the camera and lighting tricks associated with the commercial world, Jaume wanted the film to be very cinematic in its use of visual language," says Windon. "We first viewed his previous work to establish what he didn't want to repeat, and then we went

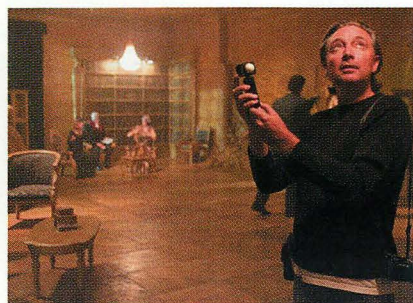
through the script with a fine-toothed comb, identifying what we felt to be the most important elements of each scene. We were always asking ourselves what was visually telling the story and determining how the energy of the camera could contribute to the way the story was told."

To achieve Collet-Serra's vision, Windon did extensive testing of emulsions and techniques. "Some

of the things we did in the tests were obvious. For example, we avoided the use of smoke to create atmosphere because the blacks, of which there is so much in each frame, would have gone milky. Other tests included establishing a heavier than normal contrast for the few daylight scenes in the movie. I ended up overexposing 5218 by two stops and printing it back down in the laboratory. I also used an 81C correction filter on the lens rather than 85, and that combination gave me both the contrast I was after and a cooler, somewhat less friendly feel for daylight scenes, which is entirely appropriate for this kind of film."

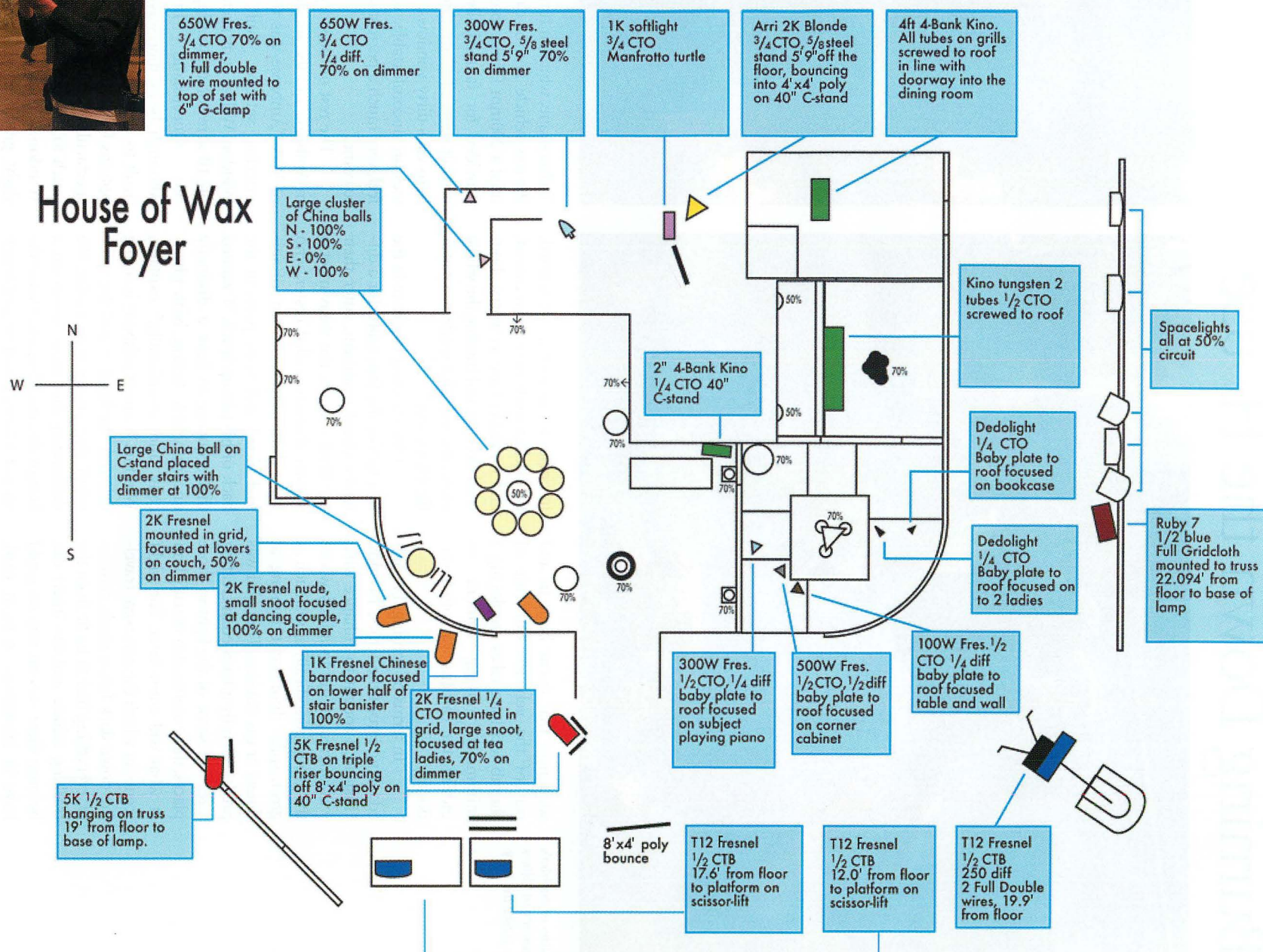
Early discussions with Collet-Serra led Windon to decide upon two different styles of camerawork for *House of Wax*. Windon explains, "In terms of story, the film is essentially divided into two parts: the first is a road movie in which the group is traveling in two cars, often at night, and the second part begins after the first member of the group is killed. Given that we come to know the characters in the first part of the film through extensive dialogue



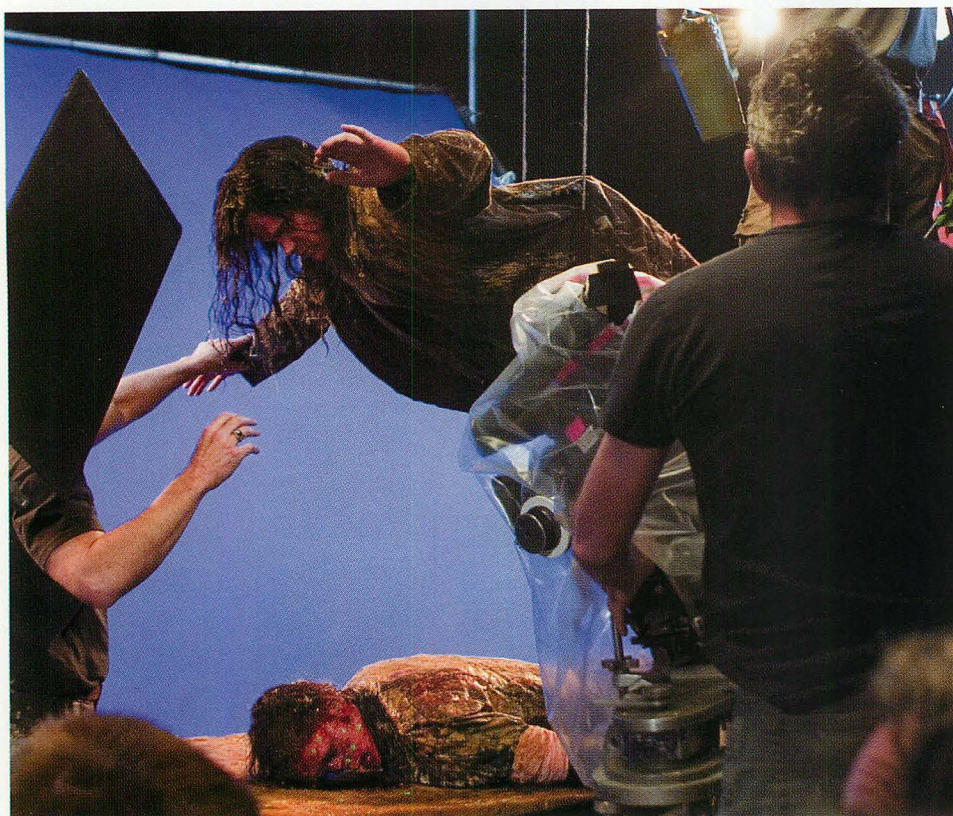


Steve Windon,
ACS takes a
reading in the
foyer set.

House of Wax Foyer



Burning Down the House



One of the film's deranged killers stalks his prey.

sequences that occur both in and out of the vehicles, our rule of thumb was long takes employing a minimally moving camera — indeed, the camera was often stationary.

“In terms of lighting, I avoided taking care of the actors,” he adds. “Instead, I sought to enhance what was offered at the locations where the group periodically stops, such as green-spike fluorescent lighting at diners or gas stations. Though I was predominantly interested in creating a realistic sense of the light in those places, those scenes also visually hint at what will come later. For night scenes in which the cars were traveling down dark forest roads, however, everything had to be lit from the tracking vehicle and the insert car, because there was no way we could have lit kilometers of bush road. However, we were very fortunate to be able to shoot most of the bush traveling sequences on a raceway that was surrounded by a real forest! This meant we could drive around

in circles for as long as we wanted, the backgrounds were taken care of, and we didn’t have to worry about road closures and turning the whole circus around. That made everyone’s life a lot easier.”

One traveling sequence in the first half of the film called for a different visual treatment. After their car breaks down, the teens meet a sinister character called Lester, who has a disturbing assortment of animal blood and body parts in the back of his pickup truck. “I wanted that sequence to have a distinctly uncomfortable feeling, both physically and emotionally,” explains Windon. “Carly [Cuthbert] is sitting between her brother and the quite weird and intimidating Lester. We deliberately shot these scenes on a bumpy dirt track because I loved the idea of it being a violent and rough ride that was literally unsettling. We chose a route along what was practically a dirt track and filmed from mostly outside the hero car with a Libra head mounted on a

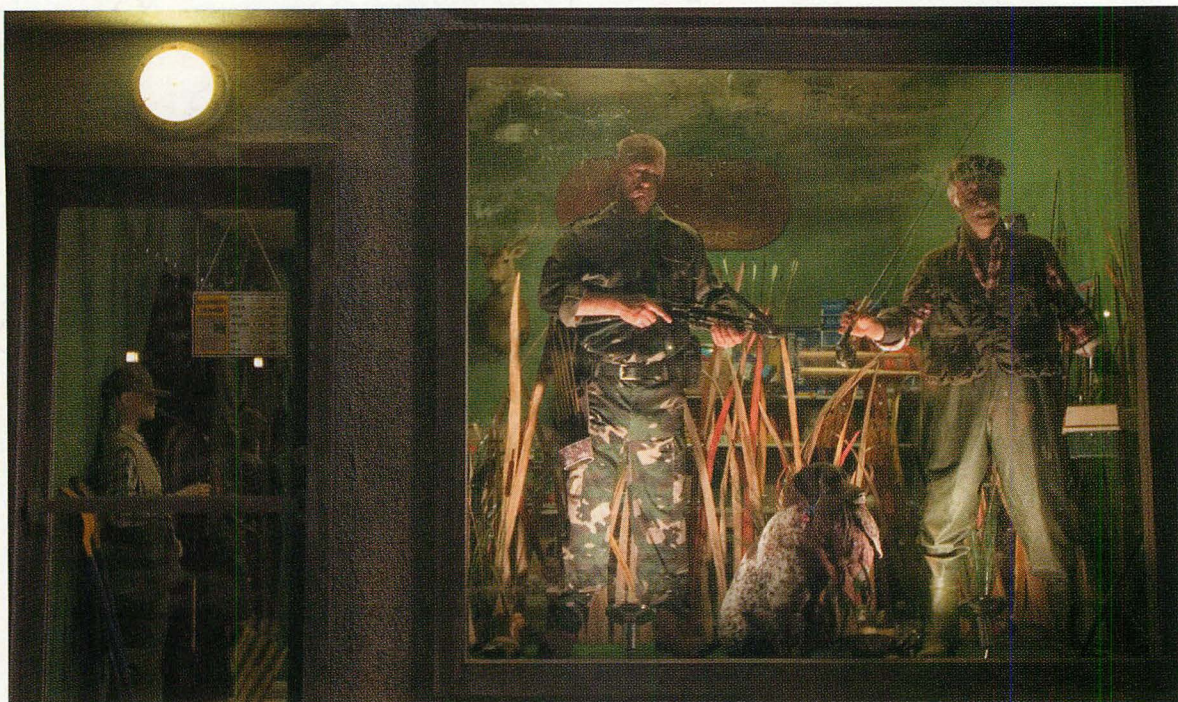


Technocrane, which in turn was on the tow vehicle. For the close-ups, I used a 200mm Primo zoom, which provided for fantastically disconcerting shots of Carly through the hero car’s dirty windows. This creates an uncomfortable, voyeuristic feel, very much a portent of what is to come.”

The rest of the story unfolds in Ambrose and the sinister House of Wax. “Ambrose was the biggest exterior set we built,” recalls Windon. Walker constructed the set on 10 acres of undulating land in the Queensland hinterland. Although the location was quite difficult to access and offered limited options for placing lights, it was “a spectacular setting that added so much to the look of the film,” says Windon. “The landscape had a slight gradient, which meant we could build the House of Wax as the proverbial, malevolent ‘house on the hill.’ The set was surrounded by tall trees, which helped create the feeling that the town was cut off

Burning Down the House

Wax hunters loom in the display window of a store.



from the rest of the world.”

Windon's basic approach to lighting the large set was to place 5Ks, 12Ks, 24Ks, Dinettes and Ruby 7s around it to bring up specific areas and to float a helium-balloon light for general ambience. “Even if the set had been built on flat ground, the balloons would still have been the way to go,” he notes. “My gaffer, Karl Engeler, had obtained the balloon lights from Lights Up Industries in the United States, and they have two different types of housings. Each balloon has dimmable HMIs and tungsten lamps in it. They were fantastic, because I didn't want the full 5550°K night blue, and I also didn't want the tungsten. With these lamps, I was able to turn on, for example, two 1.2K HMIs and three or four 2K tungstens and get to around 4200°K, a slightly cool ambience that was my base color temperature for all of our night shooting.”

Windon notes that he didn't attempt to justify the balloons as moonlight. “There was no real justification for the direction or look I got from those balloons,” he says. “They just function as a base ambience for the really dark parts of the

film. The only light in these sequences is coming from the practical lights of the town, which, in the best tradition of horror films, always fail at precisely the wrong moment! For instance, we did one 360-degree Steadicam shot moving around Carly as she runs screaming into the street. During the shot, all the lights flicker on, and when the camera stops moving, all the lights shut down again, leaving her alone and surrounded by darkness. Every light needed to be switchable to achieve sequences like that. There were around 2,270 practicals cabled into the dimmers!”

Given the importance of practicals in the overall visual scheme, Windon and Walker spent a lot of time in preproduction discussing how best to utilize them. “Given that the town was purpose-built for the film, we could put streetlights, shop-front lights, gas-station lights and so forth exactly where we wanted them,” says the cinematographer. “We worked out where the lights should go from a storytelling and compositional point of view, and I basically used those practicals as sources and the bal-

loons as supplemental light.”

The climax of the film takes place in the House of Wax, which burns — or melts — to the ground in a spectacular blaze. Two identical sets were built, one for the sequences involving real flames (dubbed “the burning set”), and the other for sequences set prior to the fire and scenes in which the firelight was replicated. “The design was based on the concept of the 1953 *House of Wax*, but this version is even more macabre,” says Windon. “The color palette is quite green, and the wax walls have a strong, shiny texture. Obviously, it was important that the place actually looked like it was made of wax, so I used a lot of reflected light to create sheens on the walls; the angle at which the lights were placed relative to the set was an important consideration.

“For the sequence in which the house burns to the ground, I used a combination of major firelight effects and actual fire, depending on which set we were using. For the non-burning set, we used interactive lighting to replicate the light from the fire for close-ups. I like to use a lot of sources when replicat-

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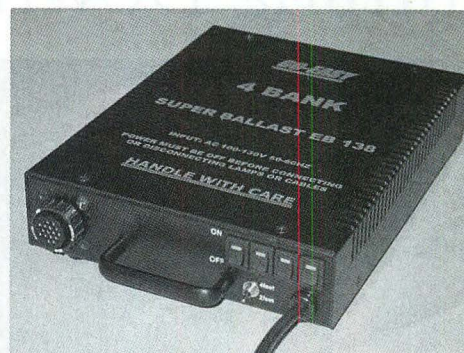
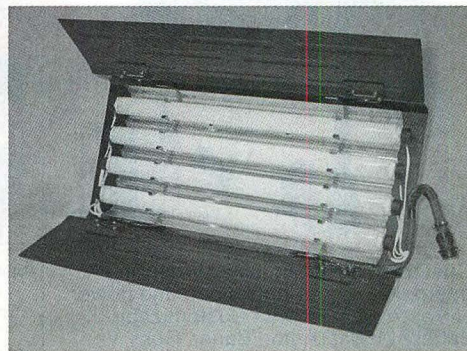
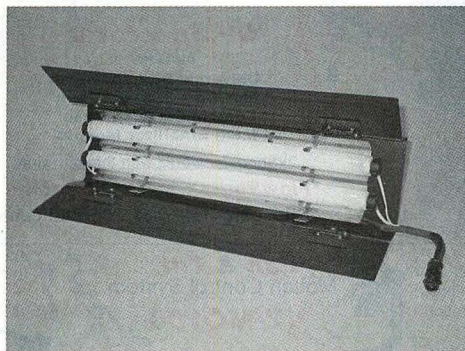
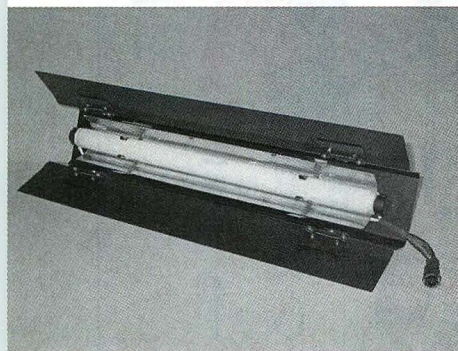
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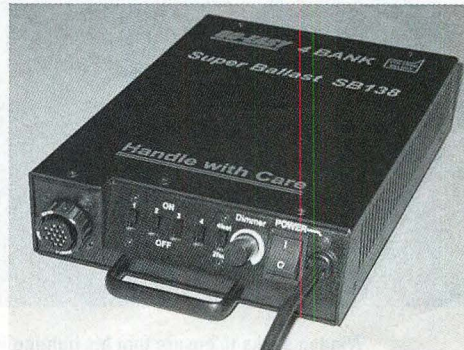
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Burning Down the House



Winston seeks to ensure that his lighting won't melt one of the film's waxen "extras."

ing firelight; I can get lots of movement in the shadows if I feel that's required, and I can also avoid repeating chasing patterns on the dimmer. This method gives me some options." For the fire gel-pack, Windon used a combination of gelled ($\frac{3}{4}$ CTO or Flame Red) and bare tungsten Par cans to provide a variation in the color of the flames. "If we were using 100 Par cans, half of them would be gelled with $\frac{3}{4}$ CTO, 20 percent would probably be gelled Flame Red, and the rest would be ungelled," he details. "We wouldn't bring the red up often, just every once in a while. By this stage in the story, the town has lost power and the fire is the only light source, so we filmed the actors with flames behind or in front of them. They were all great about taking that sort of work on."

Throughout the shoot, the filmmakers viewed high-definition

(HD) video dailies, which were projected at Warner Studios-based post facility Post Lounge, formerly known as Beeps. "The HD process for our dailies was interesting and ended up working out very well," reports Windon. A digital approximation of a printer-light setting was established on a Spirit by using the da Vinci 2K deck to simulate the printer-light settings Windon had established on his one-light workprints during film-stock tests. The HD dailies that were then projected on the JVC DLA-M5000SCU in Post Lounge's theater during lunch each day would be matched as closely as possible to what was on the negative. "For the initial tests in prep, I workprinted everything because it was critical to know where everything was sitting on the negative, particularly with that degree of underexposure," says Windon. "I was then able to compare the HD

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projection from the Spirit telecine and analyze how those images translated to what I knew would be on negative. It was a great process to use. The projection system was fantastic, and it didn't take very long to set it up to be as close as possible to the negative. Once I had locked the differentials between the digital version and the workprint in my head, I warmed to the whole concept of HD dailies. It was fantastic to have Atlab, which was processing the negative, and Charlie Ellis, the colorist from Post Lounge, literally next door to each other. [Atlab Queensland general manager] Gary Keir, Charlie and I were able to look at the workprint, then examine the negative on the HD projection and tweak the print until everything was exactly how I wanted it.

"During prep, Jaume and I had lot of discussions about why he wanted the film to be so dark," con-

tinues Windon. "He said he quite simply wanted to see less and less as the story unfolds, and he was interested in seeing how far we could go in that direction. This film was a great opportunity to delve into areas of underexposure I hadn't been asked to do before. For instance, I found ways to separate foreground and background without any back-light at all — I incorporated the textures of the set and the actor's skin into the lighting design. At the same time, I didn't want to lock the actors down to specific lighting marks, particularly because there is so much camera movement in the second half of the film. I found that on an actor's face, working at about 3½ to 4 stops underexposed became the 'normal' exposure. In that type of situation, eyelights and reflective sheens on walls and skin become very important to the success of a shot." He typically lit the backgrounds first and

then placed an edgelight for the foreground action and used the cameo light on the camera for a small amount of fill.

"Working at such low light levels, you also discover fantastic subtleties in the toe of the stock's sensitometric curve," Windon adds. "You gain a very intuitive understanding of how light works." ■

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Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions



by

Rachael Bosley, Jean Oppenheimer, Stephen Pizzello and Patricia Thomson

Confronted with short schedules and low budgets, the directors of photography on independent films are among the most resourceful in the field. While introducing their projects at the Sundance Film Festival, directors usually acknowledge a raft of collaborators, and it's rare that the cinematographer doesn't top the list.

Two cinematographers, Amy Vincent, ASC and Gary Griffin, took home their first Sundance Film Festival awards for Best Cinematography this year. A jury

comprising Chris Eyre, Vera Farmiga, John C. Reilly, B. Ruby Rich and Christine Vachon awarded the Dramatic prize to Vincent for the lively *Hustle & Flow*, and a jury comprising Jean-Philippe Boucicaut, Gail Dolgin, Steve James, Jehane Noujaim and Stacy Peralta gave the Documentary prize to Griffin for *The Education of Shelby Knox*.

AC covers these and four other Sundance projects in the following pages. (Two other features, the drama *Brothers* and the documentary *Murderball*, are covered on pages 26 and 104, respectively.)

Hustle & Flow

Cinematographer:

Amelia Vincent, ASC

Director: Craig Brewer

Amelia Vincent, ASC won the Sundance Film Festival award for Best Cinematography in a Drama for her work on *Hustle & Flow*, written and directed by Craig Brewer. Set in Memphis, Tennessee, which is also where the production was shot, the picture revolves around Djay (Terrence Howard), a pimp in the midst of a mid-life crisis who dreams of becoming a successful rapper.

Vincent, who sat down with *AC* shortly after the festival, says she was immediately struck by the explosion of color in Memphis when she went there to scout locations in March 2004. "You'd see orange hot pants walking down the street, a metallic-green Chevy Caprice with spinners on it, red-brick walls and old, rusted signs," she says. "The look of *Hustle & Flow* was inspired completely by the colors of Memphis." When the filmmakers arrived in June to shoot the picture, they discovered that dense, green foliage had sprung up during the spring. Vincent also noticed that the soaring heat covered everybody with "the summer shine of sweat," so heat and perspiration became additional components in the look of the film.

Hustle & Flow was filmed on Super16mm, in part because it allowed the production to set aside money for a digital intermediate (DI) — Vincent's first — but also because Brewer had made his first feature (*The Poor and Hungry*) on MiniDV, and Vincent thought he would feel more comfortable with 16mm's small cameras than with a 35mm package. From Panavision in Dallas, the production rented two Arri 16SR-3s (the A and B cameras), an Aaton A-Minima, a set of Zeiss Ultra Primes and a Century 6mm lens. Vincent didn't bother with zooms because "Zeiss primes are head and shoulders above the quality of the zooms available for Super 16."

Vincent shot the picture on Kodak Vision2 500T 7218 and Vision2 100T 7212. She used 7218 for night scenes and most interiors, noting that "Kodak's improvements in the stock's grain structure and its overall performance were perfect for this project." She used 7212 for day exteriors and daytime car interiors because she felt that stock matched the look of 7218 better than the higher-speed Vision2 200T 7217. "However," she notes, "that was the case on *this* project, and it wouldn't

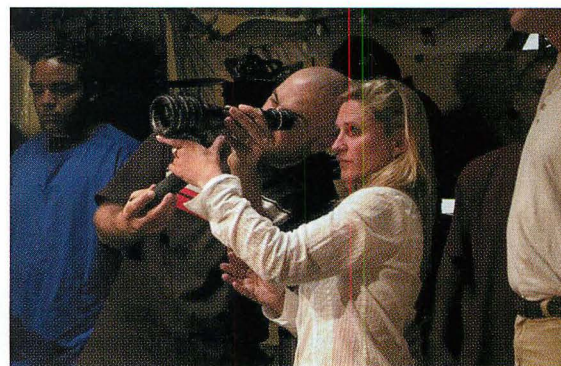
necessarily be true every time."

The cinematographer observes that Kodak's Vision2 emulsions and advances in DI technology have caused her to reevaluate Super 16 as a viable origination format. "Going into the digital realm and then being able to do a 35mm film-out without having to go through the hideous process of an optical blow-up is wonderful. Because of these two factors, I think we're seeing an upswing in the use of Super 16."

The script for *Hustle & Flow* called for scenes of overlapping dialogue that Brewer wanted to shoot in opposing close-ups, using two cameras at once. This style is something of a Brewer trademark, and Vincent embraced it. One such scene finds Djay and Nola (Taryn Manning) sitting in the front seat of a parked car, waiting for a trick to arrive. Nola is complaining about the heat and asking why she can't work out of a hotel. "We got a slightly wide two-shot from the back of the car that was lit in almost pure backlight, which was created by two 4K Pars with Chimeras through the windshield," recalls Vincent. "Then we did opposing angles from cross-back angles, with the doors off the cars. Everything was handheld. Because of our need to keep the cameras out of each other's shots, we used slightly longer focal lengths than I might have otherwise. We didn't have doubles of any lens, so we used a 50mm and a 35mm."

"When I see that scene now, I really love it, because there is a kind of visceral energy to it. There's also a sense of spontaneity because Craig was able to pick one performance and cut back and forth, rather than having to find a snippet of dialogue from take two and an overlapping piece from take three."

Another example of this style occurs late in the film, when Djay and Skinny Black (Ludacris), a rapper from the neighborhood who has hit the big time, are seated across from



one another at a club. Vincent again played the two-shot in backlight, then shot the coverage "with two crossed angles in slightly more than half-light, again on a 50mm lens and a 35mm." The keylight for this scene was provided by two crossed "Billy Boxes," devices designed by William Wages, ASC; a "Billy Box" is a cardboard filebox with a grid and a layer of 250 diffusion on the front and a 500-watt Photoflood globe inside.

Most of the film's interior scenes are set in the living room and music room of Djay's small house. Practical entrances and exits were filmed on location, but the rest of the interior work was filmed on a studio set that featured slightly larger versions of those two rooms. Because the budget didn't allow for the creation of backdrops, the set's windows had to be designed so that the viewer wouldn't see or feel that there was no "world" outside. The filmmakers took their cues from the practical location. "They had torn screens and scraps of plastic from five years' worth of stapled winter insulation over them," recalls Vincent, still excited at the memory of the photogenic décor. "A worn-out towel with a big bleach spot in it was tacked over one window, and sunlight just poured through the hole."

"The window over the big couch in the living room had a ripped, rust-orange blanket over it that gave off the most beautiful, warm light when we put our tungsten lights [outside the window]. Our production designer, Keith

Opposite: In *Hustle & Flow*, Memphis pimp Djay (Terrence Dashon Howard, center) begins to pursue his dream of becoming a rapper with a little help from his friends Shelby (DJ Qualls, right) and Key (Anthony Anderson, back to camera). Acting as the audience are two of Djay's prostitutes, Nola (Taryn Manning, foreground) and Shug (Taraji P. Henson). **This page:** Amelia Vincent, ASC and director Craig Brewer refine their approach on location in Memphis.

Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions

Brian Burns, added beautiful, super-saturated, emerald-green shipping plastic on top of the window, and it completely pulled your eye to the background when the camera was in the music room, looking through to the living room."

Vincent created a slightly cool look inside the house to contrast with the heat and warmth outside. The temperature and humidity soar

in Memphis during the summer, and she wanted the audience to feel the heat, to make it almost a character in the film. "In this film, you aren't looking for everybody to appear stunningly beautiful all the time," she says. "It's really nice to be able to play the sweat." Gaffer Dan Cornwall and key grip Jim McMillan, whom Vincent calls "a great team," designed two 12'x12'

softboxes for the studio set, one for the living room and one for the music room. Each held 36 Par cans gelled with 1/4 Blue going through light gridcloth, and each was skirted to keep spill off the walls. All of the lights were cabled to a dimmer board so they could be controlled by area; Vincent could illuminate a single corner, the middle of the room, or the entire space.

When working in confined spaces, Vincent frequently bounced Source Four Lekos into 2'x2' cards to create edgelights for actors. "I was really focused on finding the perfect reflectance angle for the edgelights, because I was dealing not only with the reflectance of a variety of skin tones, but also with sweat, which is a major player in the visual scheme."

She used Kino Flos gelled with 1/4 Blue in the music room set, and she also used "Billy Boxes" throughout the shoot. "They're lightweight, low-profile and controllable," Vincent says of Wages' invention, "and I can't think of many scenes where we didn't use them."

To help illuminate action during night exteriors, Cornwall frequently used a Gyoury Light, a dimmable HMI on an extendable pole. "They're a great low-budget solution in a lot of situations," enthuses Vincent. "They run on battery power for about three hours. Dan was holding it and running alongside the camera during a lot of night exteriors." All of the show's lighting came from Paskal Lighting in Miami or from Cornwall's own collection. "[Paskal president] Evan Green has always come through for me," Vincent notes.

Adding to the film's vibrant mix of color temperatures are the sodium-vapor streetlamps that are used throughout Memphis. For some night exteriors, such as a scene outside the Crystal Palace Roller-Skating Rink, Vincent augmented the existing streetlamps with store-bought sodium vapors. Because the

SUNDANCE 2005 AWARD WINNERS

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Drama: Amelia Vincent, ASC, *Hustle & Flow*

Documentary: Gary Griffin, *The Education of Shelby Knox*

GRAND JURY PRIZE

Drama: *Forty Shades of Blue*, directed by Ira Sachs

Documentary: *Why We Fight*, directed by Eugene Jarecki

World Cinema Drama: *The Hero*, directed by Zézé Gamboa

World Cinema Documentary: *Shape of the Moon*, directed by Leonard Retel Helmrich

DIRECTING

Drama: Noah Baumbach, *The Squid and the Whale*

Documentary: Jeff Feuerzeig, *The Devil and Daniel Johnston*

JURY PRIZE IN SHORT FILMMAKING

Patricia Riggan, *Family Portrait*

Andrea Arnold, *WASP* (International)

WALDO SALT SCREENWRITING AWARD

Noah Baumbach, *The Squid and the Whale*

AUDIENCE AWARDS:

Drama: *Hustle & Flow*

Documentary: *Murderball*

World Cinema Drama: *Brothers*

World Cinema Documentary: *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*

SPECIAL JURY PRIZES:

Originality of Vision: Rian Johnson, *Brick*; Miranda July, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*

Editing: Geoffrey Richman and Conor O'Neill, *Murderball*

Acting: Amy Adams, *Junebug*; Lou Pucci, *Thumbsucker*

OTHER SPECIAL JURY PRIZES:

After Innocence

The Liberace of Baghdad

Wall

The Forest for the Trees

orange-green hue of sodium vapors isn't terribly flattering to skin tones, Vincent played 3200°K tungsten light on skin and let the sodium vapors work the backgrounds and occasionally provide edgelight. "For example, there's a close-up of Djay's friend, Key [Anthony Anderson], where there's a 3200° tungsten temperature on his face but a yellow edge. You get the feel of that rough, edgy, urban color temperature, but it's not ugly on the skin. I used that approach over and over again, especially when we were working with extreme color temperatures, such as Cool White fluorescents."

In a night scene that shows Djay and Nola shopping for a microphone, Vincent decided to enhance the yellow feel provided by the location's main practical, a yellow sign reading "Open 24 Hours" posted outside the shop. "We augmented that with four Image 80s with gold tubes, which we put on the roof of the building. That's another example of looking for a color that actually exists and taking it further — in real life, that little sign isn't putting yellow backlight on everything."

Vincent notes that one of the things that enabled her to go so far with color-temperature choices was her use of a Nikon D-100 digital SLR camera. She says Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, AMC introduced her to the camera while she was shooting second unit on *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (AC Dec. '04). "It gives you a very accurate representation of color temperature, and though I never based my exposure on it, it gave me an instantaneous, concrete way to evaluate my choices."

The cinematographer credits the staff at FotoKem in Burbank for making the DI on *Hustle & Flow* "a fantastic experience" in terms of both technical expertise and customer service. "FotoKem did an Imagica 2K scan from the Super 16 negative and a 2K Spirit DataCine scan, and then

compared the quality of the two," she reports. "At first glance, I thought the DataCine scan was sharper, but that's because it was more contrasty. In the end, we decided on the Imagica scan because it had all the information from the negative."

FotoKem colorist Walter Volpato, whom Vincent refers to as "that fabulous Italian colorist," used the Quantel iQ software-based color-correcting system with the Q-color option. The resultant file was recorded out to Kodak 2242 intermediate stock with an Arrilaser Film Recorder. (The release prints will be on Kodak Vision 2383.) "FotoKem has a DLP Projector with the Texas Instruments black-chip technology," notes Vincent. "It's state of the art and has the most beautiful blacks in the world. They also use Truelight 3-D Look-up Tables, which is a digital rendering of the image that will most closely match the [film] projection."

Vincent was thrilled to win the Sundance award for a project that had been such a pleasure work on, and she praises Brewer, Cornwall, Burns and costume designer Paul Simmons for their contributions. "The cinematographer often gets the credit for [everything visual in a movie], but it's such a collaboration," she says. "How I take one set of decisions and translate them into another is just another layer."

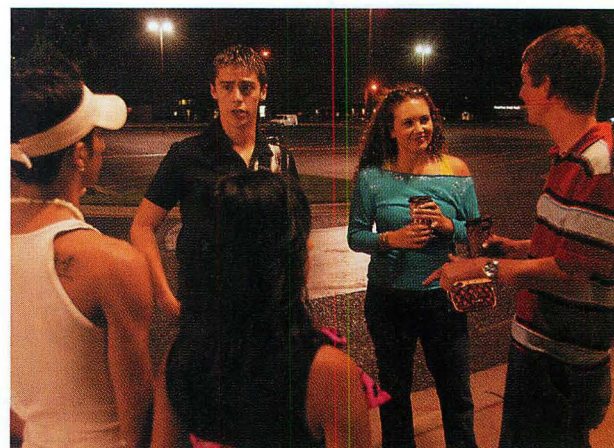
— Jean Oppenheimer

The Education of Shelby Knox **Cinematographer:**

Gary Griffin

Directors: Marion Lipschutz and Rose Rosenblatt

Gary Griffin believed he didn't stand a chance at winning Sundance's Best Cinematography Award-Documentary for *The Education of Shelby Knox*. "I thought they were going to pick a film about penguins in Antarctica, or the rain-



Political activist Shelby Knox (in blue) hangs out with her peers at one of their "hot spots" in Lubbock, Texas: a shopping-center parking lot.

forest," he says. "I've shot those kinds of films, but *Shelby Knox* is a political documentary set in Lubbock, Texas — not the most picturesque city out there." But when juror and documentary filmmaker Steve James introduced the award by saying, "Documentaries aren't all about pretty pictures and beautiful scenery, they're about getting a shot that you don't have a second chance to get," Griffin's ears perked up, and within minutes he was accepting the prize.

"*Shelby Knox* is an excellent example of filmmaking in the vérité mode where directors and [cinematographer] were really in sync," James later elaborated. On a documentary, he notes, a director labors to gain access and build trust, "but in those moments when things are happening, you really are at the mercy of your cinematographer to get it. He or she has to have the instinct and the feel of the story. In the case of *Shelby Knox*, "the main character had total comfort with the crew and camera, so it made for a very intimate and appealing portrait [and allowed] the camera to catch really special moments."

The understanding between Griffin and *Shelby Knox* co-directors Marion Lipschutz and Rose Rosenblatt didn't happen overnight. Griffin met Rosenblatt 15 years ago, when both were working on the public television series *Global Vision*. Since then, he has teamed with

Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions



Shelby Knox
cinematographer
Gary Griffin gets
ready for work.

Rosenblatt and her partner on seven documentaries. "I've learned that to have a truly successful film, I *pick* my directors," says Griffin. "I understand them, I understand what they're up to, I understand their focus." He has built long-term relationships with other directors as well, including Geraldine Wurzburg (*Educating Peter*, *Autism Is a World*).

As the title indicates, *The Education of Shelby Knox* focuses on a single individual, Shelby Knox, a teenager leading a campaign for sex education in the Lubbock public-school system. However, when the filmmakers began working on the project, that focus was not immediately evident. Lipschutz and Rosenblatt wanted to do a documentary about sex education and had narrowed their search to the Lubbock Youth Commission, a city-funded student organization that had taken up the banner of sex education — much to the conservative city's chagrin. But a month after filming started, many students bowed to pressure from city officials and resigned from the commission. "Abstinence until marriage" was official policy in Lubbock, a Bible Belt city that managed to surpass the national teen averages for sexual activity, pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

But Knox didn't quit. A devout Christian who had pledged virginity

until marriage, she recognized that most of her peers were jumping into bed with no information about birth control or disease prevention. "She was developing, whereas the others had already made up their minds about who they were and what they were going to be," says Griffin. "Shelby was on the fence about an awful lot of these issues." By following Knox's personal process of questioning, self-education and change, the filmmakers thought their documentary would do more than preach to the choir.

While both directors bonded closely with Knox, Griffin's strategy was to maintain a bit of reserve. "My relationship to Shelby was to be friendly, nice and nonpartisan. Your subject is still a subject, and you can get too deeply involved." At the same time, he knew to train the camera on her as much as possible, a lesson he learned from Washington-based cameraman Foster Wiley. Griffin and Wiley became close in 1984, after an engine blew up on the airplane carrying them and presidential candidate Gary Hart. From Wiley, says Griffin, "I learned how to always stay with the subject. Just *stay* there and keep going, keep going, keep going."

In *Shelby Knox*, that strategy is clearly evident in a scene that depicts the young woman's explosive showdown with her parents. Though they are bedrock Republicans, Danny and Paula Knox were largely supportive of their daughter's sex-education crusade, but after she appeared on a local talk-radio program, they began to worry about her safety. In the scene, Paula Knox suggests that Shelby should quit the commission and go back to her musical studies; her daughter angrily refuses and runs into her bedroom in tears. "I was thinking, 'Should I be shooting this?'" recalls Griffin. "I was almost embarrassed to be a part of it, but I had to." The camera follows the family members from the kitchen to the bedroom, where the parents comfort

Shelby and she reasserts her priorities: "God, family, country — in that order." In one fell swoop, the scene effectively conveys Knox's strong will, her family's internal dynamic, and their overarching values.

The scene's camera movement also hints at Griffin's other main influence: Eastern European cinematography, which he became acquainted with when he lived there for several years during the fall of communism. "They designed the concept of a moving camera," he says. "They would never turn the camera off, and not cut [the footage]. But you had to plan ahead, like in *Russian Ark*. I found out later on that they simply didn't have any editing facilities!"

Four years in the making, *Shelby Knox* began shooting in 2001, and Griffin traveled to Lubbock about every other month. He used his Sony BVW 400A and a wide-angle Fujinon 7x7 for budgetary reasons, and because he felt Betacam was one of the best-looking video formats at the time. "Hi-def was still in its infancy and having difficulty establishing a foothold in the industry," he notes.

Griffin usually relied on practicals and available light, but inside the Knox home he took extra pains — gelling windows, tucking 200-watt Peppers into corners, and using Lowel DP-lights through windows. "I always worry about color temperature, so I try to set the environment at one color so I can move through it freely. That's good and bad, because it makes the lighting of certain things more for exposure than for shaping. But I wanted to be in a place where I could make an exposure no matter where I was headed."

Griffin prefers optical manipulation to electronic manipulation of the camera, and he made extensive use of a Tiffen Didymium Enhancing Filter. "I discovered it 10 years ago, when I was shooting a documentary for George Lucas," he explains. "Between his *Star Wars* films, he

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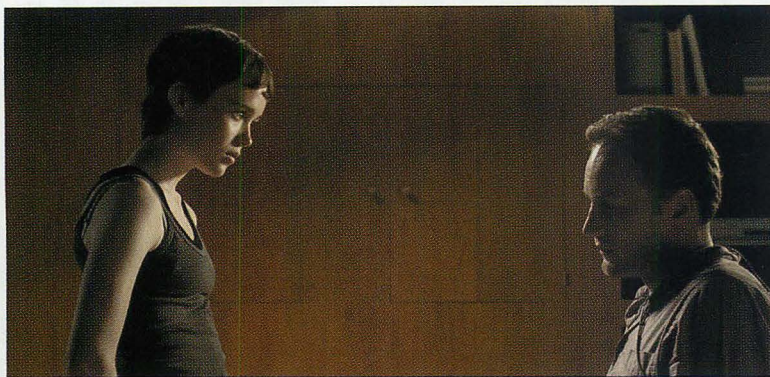
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Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions

Right: After being lured to the home of photographer Jeff (Patrick Wilson), Hayley (Ellen Page) confronts her would-be seducer in *Hard Candy*. Below: A cyan hue lends additional intensity to a kitchen close-up of Hayley.



decided to make a series of documentaries about education. I was shooting with a digital Betacam in classrooms with horrible contrast ranges, and discovered that the Enhancing Filter would extend everything. It does its job whatever the white balance, and I use it for pretty much everything now." (Ed. Note: According to Ira Tiffen, the enhancing filter is a combination of rare earth elements in glass that completely removes a portion of the light spectrum in the orange region. The effect is to increase the color-saturation intensity of certain brown, orange, and reddish objects by eliminating the muddy tones and maximizing the crimson and scarlet components. Its most frequent use is for obtaining strongly saturated fall foliage; the effect is minimal on objects of other colors, although it can make skin tones appear overly warm. Even after subsequent color timing or correction to balance out any unwanted bias in these other areas, the effect on reddish objects will still be apparent.)

On *Shelby Knox*, Griffin occa-

sionally shot with a Sony DSR500 or PD-150 in order to have a slower shutter speed available for low-light situations, such as a shopping-center parking lot where the teens hang out at night. The DVcam's diminutive size "was a really good thing. I could walk up to them and they wouldn't feel intimidated," says Griffin, who adeptly captured the teens' sexually charged shenanigans, as well a tense verbal showdown between Knox's evangelist pastor and a group of gay students she has begun to support in her sex-ed campaign.

As a teacher of documentary film production at American University, Griffin tells his students, "The important thing is shaping your story. You have to plan. You have to build those elements and look for visual segues between various elements. It's not just a bunch of three-minute segments; it all has to interconnect. And it's the interconnecting pieces that you usually have to [create]." In *Shelby Knox*, those are interstitial shots of Lubbock — its radio towers, strip malls, cattle farms and cityscape. "I'd just cruise the

countryside and look for things, whatever I liked," he says. "That's the great joy of being a cameraman: you get to go out and take pictures."

— Patricia Thomson

Hard Candy

Cinematographer:

Jo Willems

Director: David Slade

Hard Candy is not a film for the squeamish. The discomforting plot concerns a 32-year-old fashion photographer, Jeff (Patrick Wilson), who arranges to meet a 14-year-old girl, Hayley (Ellen Page), after wooing her over the Internet. Unable to suppress his desire, Jeff lures the teen back to his house, where he continues the flirtation with cocktails and flattery. Their banter soon evolves into a tense game of cat-and-mouse, with surprising and disturbing consequences.

The story's twists are sure to generate some controversy, and the faint of heart will find no refuge in the filmmakers' approach to the material. Roughly 80 percent of the movie is confined to Jeff's house, and most of the action is rendered in claustrophobic compositions, razor-sharp detail and ultra-tight close-ups of the actors. The cumulative effect of these strategies is a relentless suspense that builds inexorably toward the film's squirm-inducing climax.

During the film's Sundance premiere, cinematographer Jo Willems witnessed firsthand the emotional impact of his images on an unsuspecting viewer: "The movie is very intense all the way through, and it really doesn't give you any room to breathe. In the middle of that first screening, I noticed this one guy leave his seat to go sit on the floor against the far wall, where he just kind of curled up and started shaking his head. He made it all the way through, but he was definitely on the ropes. Later, when we all came

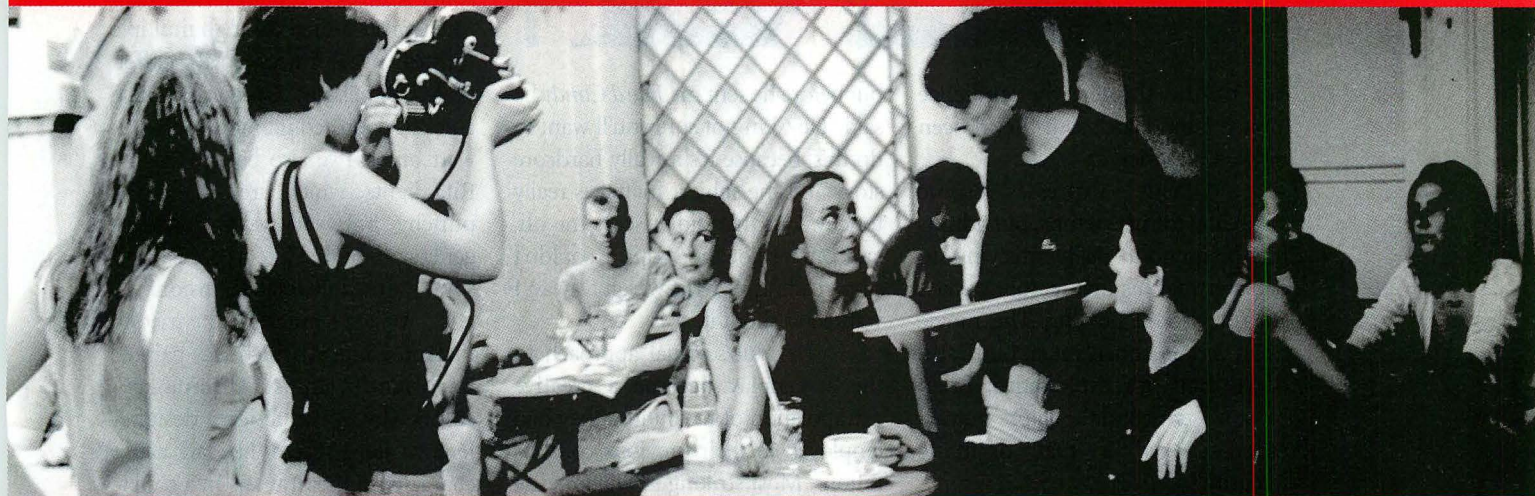


Hard Candy frame grabs and photo courtesy of Jo Willems and Lions Gate Films.

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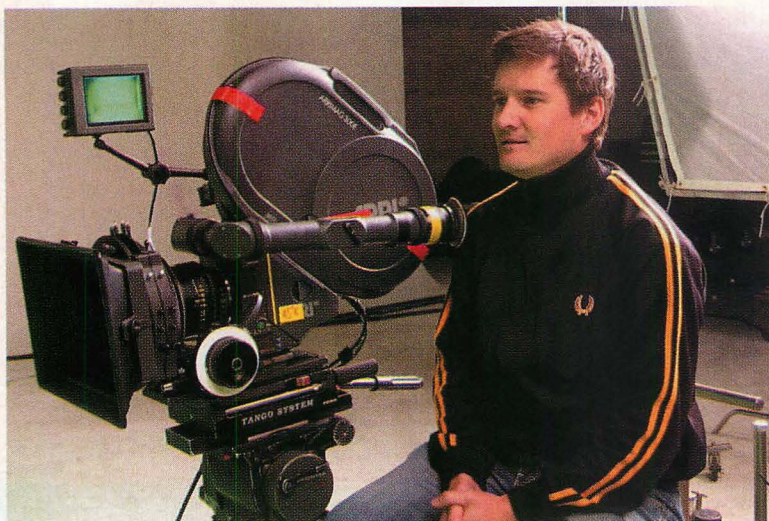


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Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions

Willems describes *Hard Candy* as "very intense all the way through ... it really doesn't give you any room to breathe."



out of the theater, the audience looked a bit dazed, as if they'd been hit by a hammer."

Willems expresses some sympathy for his victims, but admits that he found it "really satisfying" to discover that his first feature packed such a visceral punch. "The movie has a certain shock value, but I also don't think it's exploitative. Brian Nelson's script and the actors' performances have a real dramatic integrity."

A native of Belgium, Willems attended film school in both his homeland, at the St. Lukas School of Visual Arts, and in England, at the London Film School. The cinematographer's partner in crime on *Hard Candy* was director David Slade, who first hired Willems in 1999 to shoot a music video for the British band 3 Colors Red. Their subsequent video, for the Stereophonics' "Mr. Writer," earned Willems a Best Cinematography nomination at the English music industry's CAD Awards. Willems' résumé also includes the Justin Timberlake video "Cry Me a River" and countless commercials, many of which were helmed by Slade. Willems offers, "I've just been really in tune with David over the years; I moved to America in 2000, and he came over a year later. He'd been sending me different feature scripts,

but before he sent me *Hard Candy* he said, 'Hey, I'm not sure you'll want to do this, because it's a really hardcore story and the subject matter is really touchy.' But that didn't scare me off, and once I got the script, I couldn't stop reading it. I knew right away I wanted to shoot it."

The duo's visual approach to the screenplay became a creative extrapolation of techniques they had employed in their previous collaborations. Most striking is Willem's use of an 11-degree camera-shutter angle to heighten the feel of the film's action. "The 11-degree shutter gave us a very sharp, crisp image, and it made motion very kinetic," he explains, noting that he used a Panaflex Platinum and a Pan-Arri 435 (for occasional high-speed footage) on the show. "A good example of that look is a violent confrontation between Jeff and Hayley in a bathroom shower. You can see the water very sharply, and the overall feeling is very intense. The camera is really *in there* with the characters, and it plays a very active part in the scene. It really intensifies the violence by pushing the audience's noses right into the action. We wanted the viewers to experience the scene in the same way Jeff and Hayley do."

The 11-degree shutter mandated a good deal of light in the film's main house set, which

was constructed in a Burbank, California, soundstage. "Everything was lit with tungsten units, because we had to be able to dim the lights up and down at times, which is just not possible with HMIs. Because of the amount of light required by the shutter angle, we ended up using a lot of Dinos aimed through big frames of diffusion. That's my favorite kind of lighting: soft and contrasty. For close-ups, I would usually just move a big source closer to the actors or bring in a smaller, softer source — usually a Nine-light Maxi-Brute aimed through multiple frames of diffusion. My gaffer, Walter Bithel, has also got me using chicken coops containing six 1,000-watt bulbs. I've also been using 1K Rifa lights, which are small, very punchy but very soft units. In general, though, I like to use a heavy source aimed through diffusion."

Willems notes that he tried to make the house, which was painted in bright, "almost chroma-key" colors by production designer Jeremy Reed, seem like an active character in the drama. "In a couple of scenes, I wanted to use lighting to make it appear as if the walls were actually breathing," he says. "To do that, we made the walls go brighter while simultaneously taking the light down a bit on the actors. It's not an obvious effect, though — it's more subliminal."

"I didn't want to be too literal about the day interior setting of the house," he adds. "I didn't worry too much about the timeline of the film, which is set during the day from sunrise to sunset. Since the behavior of the characters gets darker and darker, I wanted to reflect that in the lighting. I think if you can make the audience believe in reality of the world you're creating, you can pretty much do anything that works for a scene — the audience will go there with you. You just start from the mood in a scene, pointing the audience to where you want them to go



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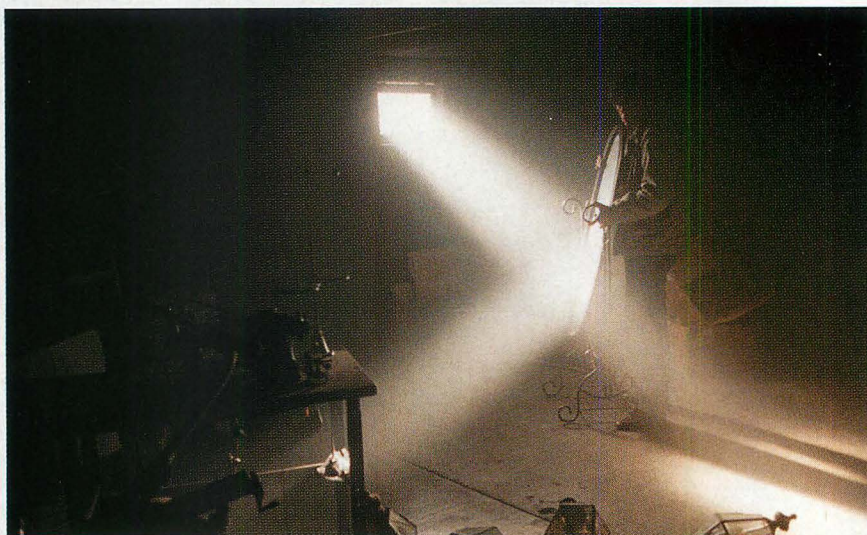
The enterprising Brendan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) angles a mirror to search for evidence that might unravel the mystery in *Brick*. An 18K bouncing into a 4'x4' mirror outside sent the shaft of light into the room, and the crew combined Rosco Fog Fluid and Diffusion in a Can to add atmosphere.

and what you want them to believe."

The cinematographer had a few other tricks up his sleeve. He lent extra aggression to some scenes by employing an Image Shaker provided by Clairmont Camera. "It was the first time David and I had used that device. I felt it really lent some adrenaline to the action in the bathroom scene, and we also used it for a few other sequences. We love shaking the camera for visual effect, but on our last project I had gotten a black eye from shaking the camera so hard, so I wanted to try the Image Shaker. It worked really well, but in some situations David thought it looked a bit too 'mechanical,' so he occasionally asked me to shake the camera by hand."

Another special tool was an anamorphic lens attachment that Willems procured on a visit to Panavision's Hollywood facility. "We used a set of Primo lenses on the show, and at key points in the story, we ended up using this attachment on the front of our lenses to create lens flares. There's a scene where Jeff is waking up after being drugged, and to convey his disorientation, we created flares by shining two lights straight into the lens attachment. The result was a kind of blurred perspective with these hot spots in the lens. We were shining the lights from just outside of frame, but we aimed the beams right into the lens. It worked really well for the scene."

Willems notes that most of the film was shot with longer lenses, which allowed him to compress backgrounds and focus the viewer's attention on very tight close-ups of the actors. "Almost everything was shot with fairly long lenses — the close-ups were mostly done with a 100mm or 150mm lens. The 100mm was our workhorse; after a while, we started joking that it was our wide-angle lens. It's very difficult for a focus puller when you're shooting everything wide open on long lenses, so my first AC, Matt Baker, deserves



a lot of credit. I think a 27mm might have been the widest lens we ever used, but we also used a 40mm. I feel that using fewer lenses creates more of a sense of style than using every lens in the box."

The production had a budget of \$1 million and an 18-day schedule, factors that impacted Willems' work in several ways. He shot the picture in 3-perf Super 35mm (which allowed 14 minutes of shooting per camera mag, instead of the usual 11) and used one stock, Kodak Vision 200T 5274. "When you shoot 3-perf, you can't print it, so that meant we had to do a digital intermediate [DI]. To that end, I felt 74 would give us the cleanest look and the best grain structure. I also wanted the entire film to have a uniform look, and I could shoot both day exteriors and day interiors that same stock."

The DI was supervised by Slade and colorist Jean-Clement Soret at The Moving Picture Company in London. The production couldn't afford to fly Willems overseas to participate in the grading sessions, but the cinematographer says he is comfortable with the results. "DI work is a sensitive subject because the people in that post suite have a substantial influence over the final look of the film," he observes. "I've worked on a few commercials and music videos where the results

were barely recognizable to me when they aired. I would sometimes say to myself, 'I didn't shoot that,' or 'I didn't want it to look like that.' But I've been working with David for the past five years, and he's been doing most of his coloring with Jean-Clement, who's a phenomenally talented man, so I knew everything would turn out fine. We didn't use any filtration or diffusion on the lens during the shoot, and at the DI stage, they made adjustments to the color, sharpness and contrast of the images. There's much lower contrast in the film's early scenes, when the main characters first meet in a coffee shop; as the film progresses, the contrast gets a lot heavier. The DI was a leap of faith for me, but I'm pleased with the results."

Lions Gate Films will release *Hard Candy* later this year.

— Stephen Pizzello

Brick

Cinematographer:

Steve Yedlin

Director: Rian Johnson

Of all the cinematographers at Sundance this year, it's possible that Steve Yedlin enjoyed the longest prep for his project, *Brick*. "I've been best friends with [writer/director] Rian Johnson for 10 years, and we talked about *Brick* for five or six of those

Brick photos courtesy of Rian Johnson. Yedlin photo by Ryan McCoy.



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10:00am to 12:00pm

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Panel members: Allen Daviau, ASC, Jack Green, ASC, Steve Burum, ASC and Laszlo Kovacs, ASC

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Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions



Brick
cinematographer
Steve Yedlin
films a
negotiation
between
Brendan and
local drug lord
"The Pin" (Lukas
Haas).

years," says Yedlin. "By the time we started shooting, we knew every shot down to a T. In fact, there are sequences Rian described for me five years ago that look exactly the way he described them back then."

In *Brick*, which will be released by Focus Features later this year, the teenaged Brendan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) embarks upon a tireless investigation into the murder of his troubled ex-girlfriend after he discovers her body lying next to a drainage ditch. Though Brendan has avoided entering into his high school's social strata, his confrontational methods quickly stir things up in their darkest corners. Modeled upon the spare storytelling style of Dashiell Hammett, *Brick* comes complete with a femme fatale who often materializes out of the darkness, Laura (Nora Zehetner); a villain with a mysterious moniker, "The Pin" (Lukas Haas); and an ineffectual authority figure, the assistant vice principal (Richard Roundtree).

"Rian first wrote this as a short story to get the Hammett feel down," says Yedlin, "and although he told me about the story, he wouldn't show it to me until it was finished. I was so excited about it that I read all of Hammett's books in the meantime. Hammett's prose is almost like a script in that there's no internal monologue; the text is very stylized but brief descriptions of what physically occurs. For instance, there's a scene in *Red Harvest* where, with nothing to suggest that the main

character is doing anything but arriving home alone, there's suddenly the explosive, stylized, yet matter-of-fact sentence, 'A bullet kissed a hole in the doorjamb next to my noodle.' And that's the whole paragraph."

Although *Brick* has its roots in hard-boiled noir, the filmmakers studiously avoided taking the visuals in the same direction. "We knew there was a danger of this being perceived as a one-trick pony, just a film noir set in high school, and that's one reason we decided to let the film's reality be its own, to create a distinct look from within rather than slapping a look on from the outside," says Yedlin. "We didn't want the style to be distracting or affected."

"We used a few movie lights, but we lit as much as possible with household bulbs. The lighting is sculpted, but it's often provided by the practicals in the room. However, those practicals were carefully designed or chosen to [create] a certain effect. Rian has such control of the cinematic language that lighting was integral to the story at the script stage; he was extremely specific about [the design of practicals] in every location. We usually used 150-watt clear bulbs in them so that the cones of light on the ceilings and floors would be brighter and sharper than the diffused light from the lamp shades."

Yedlin honed his approach to lighting by working as a gaffer and cinematographer on a number of low-budget projects after he graduated from college. "Gaffing is a great way to learn how to technically achieve certain looks," he says. "I often worked with cinematographers whose style wasn't necessarily my style but who really knew the logistics of how to create what they wanted, and I also worked with cinematographers who created a look I liked but went the long way around the mountain to do it. It was a great way to gain experience."

"I've designed and built lights

of one kind or another on almost every feature I've worked on," he continues. "The ones I made for *Brick* were poorly constructed, very temporary, but the quality of light they rendered was fantastic, so I've since designed a more durable version of them. We called the light the Mark I, and it was a very thin, flat piece of fiberglass insulation with [plastic] sockets in it. We used 150-watt frosted bulbs, and the unit functioned as its own soft reflector. We typically placed the practicals where we wanted them and then used the Mark Is for fill. They were floppy and mountable only by a removable rod of aluminum angle stock, and they weren't built to last longer than one job. The new version, the Mark II, is made of .025-inch curved sheet aluminum instead of fiberglass, so it's rigid instead of floppy. It has proper spuds for mounting on C-stands instead of the detachable aluminum angle stock, and its sockets are made of high-temp wire and porcelain instead of plastic."

Yedlin photographed *Brick* in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio with a Panaflex Gold II, and he used a 14.5-50mm T2.2 Primo Macro Zoom (PMZ) throughout the shoot. (The B camera was an Arri 35-3 equipped with Panavision MKII primes.) "I've now shot four features primarily on the PMZ," says the cinematographer, whose recent credits include *Dead Birds* and *May*. "It's very sharp and very versatile, good for working quickly in a range of circumstances. Its minimum focus is about 2 inches in front of the glass, so the only time I need to change it is if I want a longer-lens shot. I really like wide lenses but don't care for the annoying barrel distortion that the cheaper and/or older wide lenses tend to have. The great thing about the PMZ is that it doesn't have bad curvature at the 14.5mm side, so you get the perspective of a wide lens without the distortion."

Yedlin, who does his own

operating, often had the camera mounted on a geared Panahead and a slider during *Brick's* 20-day shoot. "When time gets scarce on a low-budget movie, the slider can make a shot that would've been a lock-off something that has a little design to it, especially in conjunction with the PMZ. On a 75mm lens, you can do a small move, like a push in 2½ feet, and you don't even see it, but on a wide lens you do. In fact, we specifically designed that look in *May*. There are a lot of shots in that movie where a little move creates the feel of a big move — the camera moves just a few inches to reveal a new element towering over the scene. That's when I first got the slider, and I've used it with a geared head ever since."

In one sequence, Brendan leads a menacing thug on a long chase down the school's exterior corridors, and the camera skims over the ground, capturing frontal close-ups of the characters' feet. "We wanted to be down close to the cement, so we had the camera dolly on top of a Western dolly with a really long offset and an underslung head, a Weaver Steadman," says Yedlin. "It was a big rig with huge tires that could muscle over anything, and the lens was right off the ground. It doesn't look like a perfectly smooth dolly track, but it's not too bumpy. We actually accomplished a number of moves in the film with that double-dolly arrangement and no track."

Brick was shot almost entirely at practical locations in San Clemente, California, and Yedlin says he continually marveled at production designer Jodie Tillen's ability to "not only plan out what we needed, but also work on the fly when something had to change quickly. I don't know how she did it. She had that big-budget mentality: whatever we needed, she would get, and she did it on our budget."

One of the film's more unusual interiors is a large mansion

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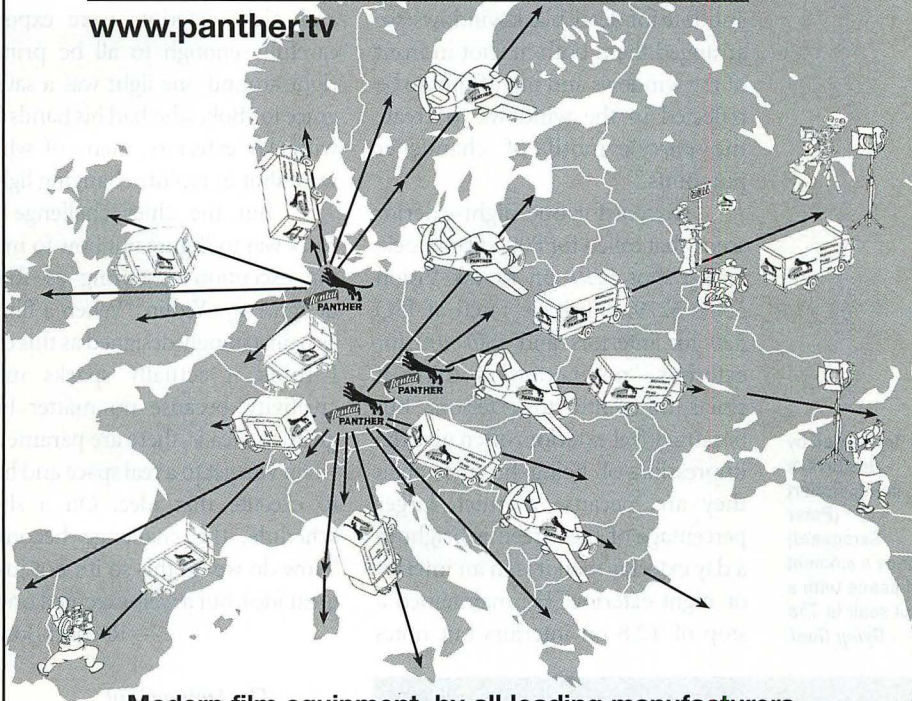
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Sundance 2005: Vibrant Visions

where Brendan crashes an exclusive party late one night. "We found that location at the last minute, and it was an eccentric house, expensive but not really aesthetically appealing," says Yedlin. "The interior was unfinished, and the main room had huge windows that looked out onto nothing, which seemed like a big problem at first; we didn't have enough power to light outside, and even if we'd had it, there was nothing to light — there was just a low hill and mostly night sky directly out the window. But there were a couple of chandeliers lying on the floor, and they were our antidote for dead, black windows; we arranged them both in shot in front of the windows and out of shot to be reflected in the windows to create the party's motif of chandelier pinpoints."

Except for one night-exterior scene that called for 800-speed stock, Yedlin shot *Brick* on Kodak Vision 500T 5279, which he rated at ISO 320 for interiors and ISO 400 for exteriors, "not because I think it reacts differently to exteriors, but because I feel exteriors often give the impression of being brighter than they are, because a much larger percentage of the screen is bright in a day exterior than it is in an interior or night exterior." He maintained a stop of T2.8 on interiors but notes

that he "sometimes ended up shooting wide open, at T2.2. I try to avoid that because of focus. No matter how good the focus puller is, if an actor is moving a lot and I only give the AC half an inch of depth of field, then any focus problem is my fault, not the AC's."

Yedlin color-timed *Brick* at FotoKem, where he worked with colorist Bob Frederickson. "After [cinematographer] Tom Richmond recommended Bob to me, I had a great experience with him on *Dead Birds*, so we took *Brick* [to FotoKem] as well. The fact that the interiors and night exteriors were exposed carefully enough to all be printed right around one light was a saving grace for Bob, who had his hands full with day exteriors, many of which were shot in rapidly changing light."

But the chief challenge on *Brick* was to "figure out how to make the execution as strong as Rian's design," says Yedlin. "When a film is as painstakingly designed as this one, I think it actually sparks more creativity, because no matter how great an idea is, there are parameters when you get to a real space and have to execute that idea. On a short schedule, the challenge becomes, 'How do we do this so it's not just a great idea, but a well-executed one?'"

— Rachael Bosley

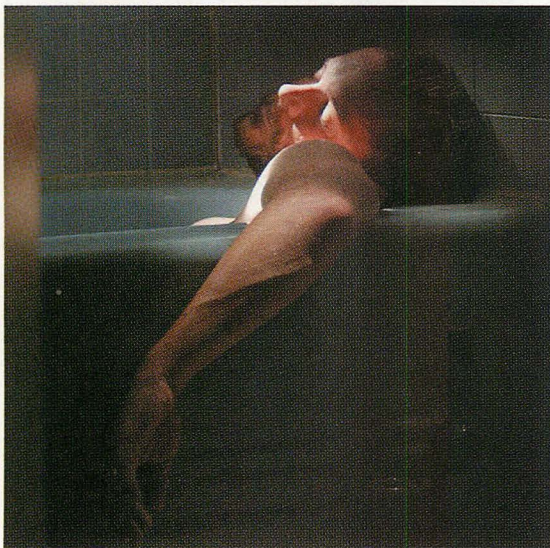
the stage play by New York playwright Craig Lucas and marks Lucas' feature-directing debut. Fifteen years ago, Bukowski's name came up when the screen adaptation of Lucas' *Longtime Companion* was in the works, but the timing didn't work out. Since then, the cinematographer has shot numerous studio and independent features, including *Arlington Road*, *The Minus Man*, *Household Saints* and *Ethan Frome*.

Set in 1995, *The Dying Gaul* tells the story of Robert (Peter Sarsgaard), a struggling screenwriter whose script has attracted the attention of a smooth studio executive, Jeffrey (Campbell Scott). Robert's screenplay is a deeply felt, autobiographical work about the death of his male lover, but Jeffrey insists that it won't be commercially viable unless the doomed lover is changed to a female. The honcho offers a million dollars for a rewrite, and Robert reluctantly acquiesces. He soon falls in socially with the executive and his wife, Elaine (Patricia Clarkson), a former screenwriter with too much time on her hands. When Robert confesses to Elaine that he seeks solace and sexual release in Internet chat rooms, Elaine's curiosity prompts her to explore that community, and she soon makes a shattering discovery.

Lucas' play unfolds from Robert's point of view, but in adapting the story to the screen, Lucas decided to emphasize a more objective perspective. "Bobby and I decided the camera would be the eye of God, looking at the steps we humans take that bring us closer and closer to the precipice," says Lucas. "So the camera is like a shark, slowly gliding, moving, circling around the action."

Most of that action happens in Jeffrey and Elaine's magnificent home, a practical location in Malibu where the crew spent two weeks of the 25-day shoot. The other primary location is Robert's small apartment, and the contrast between the two was key to the film's visuals. "Jeffrey and Elaine

Tormented by his lover's death, Robert (Peter Sarsgaard) finds a moment of peace with a hot soak in *The Dying Gaul*.



***The Dying Gaul* Cinematographer:**

Bobby Bukowski

Director: Craig Lucas

A dark and stylish thriller, *The Dying Gaul* has been called "post-modern noir." Director of photography Bobby Bukowski feels this description is apt. "There is a lot of darkness in the film, that's for sure," he says. "People are doing secretive, nefarious deeds and don't want to be revealed. This film is about hiding and lying, and that's where the darkness comes from."

The Dying Gaul is based on

The Dying Gaul photos courtesy of Holidigger Studios.

live like the gods on top of Mount Olympus, in a space so grand that they're dwarfed by the architecture," says Bukowski, "whereas Robert is a more subterranean creature." A set built onstage, Robert's apartment was designed to look as though it's half underground, looking up at the sidewalk. As Lucas explains, "It's easy to say to Robert, 'Don't take the money! Haven't you read *Faust*?!' But if you've ever been poor, a million dollars is an immense amount of money. So I wanted the world that Jeffrey and Elaine live in to be extremely beautiful in an almost European way; I wanted it to look so delicious that you'd want to fall into it, like a wonderful, down bed. By contrast, we wanted Robert's apartment to look like [Dostoevsky's] *Notes From Underground*, as though he'd literally sunk and become a kind of bug or mole."

Bukowski shot *The Dying Gaul* in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio with a pair of Panaflex Gold IIs, which were usually mounted with Primo prime lenses. He chose Fuji film stocks because he likes how they render flesh tones. "Fuji expresses more of the yellow in the skin," says Bukowski, "and when we're dealing with Jeffrey and Elaine's privileged world, that golden glow is important." He filmed night scenes on SuperF-400 8582 and day scenes on RealA 500D 8592. On day exteriors, Bukowski overexposed the 8592 by two stops and pull-processed it by one stop to lower contrast and saturation and tighten the grain. "Fuji reacts well to that," he notes. "It makes flesh tones creamier."

When he wanted especially vivid colors for moments of high drama, Bukowski used Fuji Super F-64D 8522. One such scene depicts Elaine's reaction to a second chat-room shock. "What she was feeling was so heightened that I knew the colors should be saturated," he explains.

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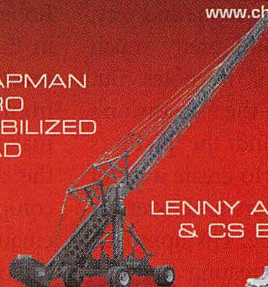
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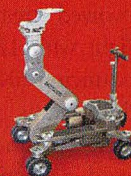
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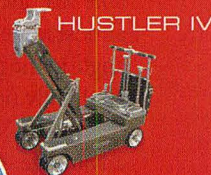
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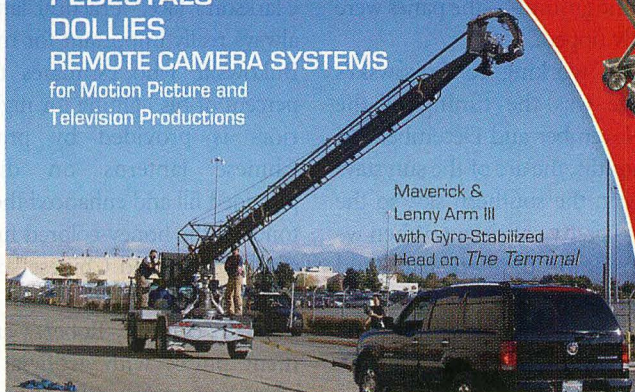


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2001
Emmy Award
Winner

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The Dying Gaul
cinematographer
Bobby Bukowski
works on
location in
Malibu

Bukowski had to considerably expand his normal lighting package. "I usually use very big lights and very, very small lights, and pretty much nothing in between," he notes. But because gelling the mansion's windows was beyond the picture's low budget, he had to create a lot of fill to balance interiors and exteriors while working inside. His approach typically involved creating a directional sidelight with 12K HMI Pars and then bouncing 6K Pars off the ceiling, white walls or bleached muslin for fill. "Fortunately, we were able to avoid reflections because almost none of the glass was at a right angle to the ground — the panes were all slightly tipped."

Also working to Bukowski's advantage was the timing of the shoot: November and December. "In those months, the arc of the sun stays very low in the southern sky, so the light stays pretty consistent. When we were filming on the back patio and looking at the sea, the sun stayed as a backlight, and I was able simply to fill it back in with [bounced] sunlight. That was a real plus."

Throughout the shoot, Bukowski was careful to base his technical decisions on the emotional requirements of the script. "In preproduction, we'd go scene by scene, and I'd always ask the same question: 'Why does this scene exist dramatically?'" he recalls. "To me, that's a key to the visuals. If Craig said,

'In this scene, Robert feels really alienated,' that immediately suggested how to position the actor in the frame, how much space to put around him, and whether the light should hit him or not." Lucas notes that Bukowski's emphasis on emotions is one of the cinematographer's greatest strengths: "The thing that impresses me is that Bobby's light is always expressive of the *inner* condition. In this picture, the light frequently falls on someone's chest instead of his or her face, and the chest is where the heart is."

Bukowski also used lighting to underscore the contrasts between Jeffrey and Elaine's world and Robert's world. This is most evident in the chat-room scenes, where key revelations take place. Taking a tip from director Alan Rudolph, the filmmakers decided to focus mostly on the actors' faces rather than their computer screens. Elaine's face always emanates a warm, golden glow, which Bukowski created by hanging a Source Four Leko from a goalpost and tightly focusing the beam to bounce off a white card on the computer monitor. This and a practical desk lamp fitted with a 75-watt household bulb illuminated Clarkson's face. "Practical lamps are always really important for me," says Bukowski, who estimates that 75 percent of his lighting for night interiors is provided by practicals. Chinese lanterns on dimmers provided fill and enhanced the warm tones of the honey-colored furniture and carved-wood Chinese screen in Elaine's study.

In contrast, Robert's environment pulses with artificial colors when he is online. Blue — a Source Four Leko gelled with Full CTB bouncing off a white card at the monitor — dominates the scheme, and it's supplemented with flashing, red-gelled Lekos bouncing off of 4'x4' beadboard, ostensibly from a construction site outside Robert's apartment windows (a touch that recalls a flashing red light in Robert's

recurring nightmare). "It was important for the color to be more heightened, so the motivation was not so much reality but an expressionistic stroke of color," says Bukowski.

Adding nuance to a particular on-line scene was the Clairmont Swing & Shift lens system. Housed on a bellows, the lens has a shallow, pinpoint focus that shifts when the lens is tilted. "You can be very, very specific," says Bukowski, who used 18mm, 28mm and 50mm lenses with the system. "We used the Swing & Shift to film Robert masturbating, because Craig asked, 'How can we turn this into something very tactile to make it about what he's seeing and hearing and smelling?'" With the specialized lens system, Bukowski could shift focus between parts of Robert's face, showing an ear, then an eye, and letting the rest drop away. The lens was equally effective at focusing on specific lines of text on the computer screen.

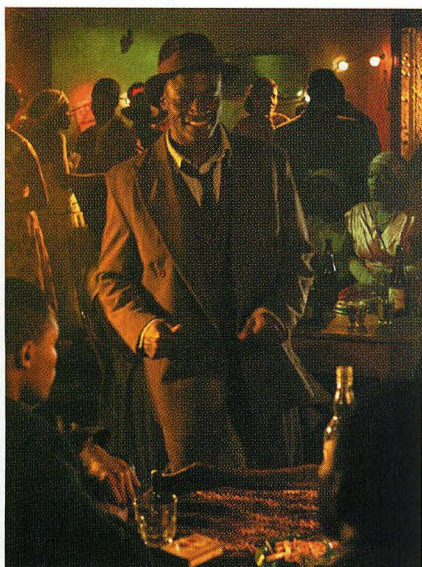
Throughout *The Dying Gaul*, camera angles are another subtle signifier. Echoing positions of power, the camera initially points down at Robert and up at Jeffrey, "who looks like he's running China," as Lucas puts it. As the film progresses, the power dynamic switches, and so do the camera positions. "Mike Nichols and George Stevens did the same thing in their films," notes Lucas, an assiduous film buff. The director adds that he hopes to work with Bukowski on his next film. "Bobby taught me so much about lighting," he says. "And he let me look through the camera, which I loved, because I felt like Truffaut!"

— Patricia Thomson

Drum

Cinematographer: Lisa Rinzler
Director: Zola Maseko

Sophiatown, South Africa, in the 1950s was the equivalent of Chicago in the 1920s or Harlem in the 1930s: the colorful epicenter of a veritable explosion in music, fashion,



Drum journalist Henry Nxumalo (Taye Diggs) arrives at a shebeen.

culture and politics. A "freehold" township where blacks were allowed to own property, this community on the outskirts of Johannesburg offered the best and worst of urban life. Home to a thriving gangster subculture, it also attracted sophisticated professionals, writers, artists and bohemians who sang, danced and drank until dawn at a shebeens, a do-it-yourself nightclub (often in a person's home) where blacks and whites mingled in defiance of racial laws.

Drum examines this vibrant community by telling the story of Henry Nxumalo (Taye Diggs), a black South African journalist who was murdered on orders from the Nationalist government after he wrote a series of articles exposing horrifying prison and work-farm conditions. More than a biopic, *Drum* is a portrait of Sophiatown before the government razed it to make room for "white homes." The film recently won the top prize at Africa's leading film festival, Fespaco, held in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso.

When director of photography Lisa Rinzler (*Pollock*, *Dead Presidents*, *Three Seasons*) read the script, she immediately thought of shooting

with reversal stock. "My hope and goal was to not have it to look too slick or pretty," she explains. "But we eventually decided not to go too grainy. We felt the visuals should have a certain panache, but a kind of intense reality rather than a period nostalgia."

However, the lab at Johannesburg's Sasani Studios could only cross-process reversal stock, which would have created a radically different look than what the filmmakers intended. "Cross-processing reversal makes skin look cyan, which would have been totally wrong for this film," says Rinzler. "After a lot of testing, we decided to do a 75-percent bleach bypass. I would have preferred to do it on the original negative, but the agreement with production was to protect the original neg and do it on the interpositive [IP]." Rinzler, production designer Eggert Ketilsson and costume designer Pierre Viennings subsequently worked to establish a muted, desaturated palette, but then "popped the frame with color, bringing in vivid reds, turquoises and greens," says the cinematographer.

However, the print that was screened at Sundance was struck from an IP that had not gone through the silver-retention process. "I'd say we got about 50 percent of the look we wanted," admits Rinzler. "Because we had decided on the bleach bypass, I lit more flatly, which is something that goes against my nature. If I hadn't been lighting for the special process, I would've used a lot less light." The filmmakers hope that once *Drum* is picked up for distribution, the post process will be carried out as they intended, she adds.

Drum takes its title from the black lifestyle magazine where Nxumalo worked. Owned by Jim Bailey, a white British émigré (portrayed in the film by Jason Flemyng), the magazine was staffed almost entirely by blacks. The one exception was photographer Jurgen



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Schadeberg (Gabriel Mann).

In fact, Rinzler and director Zola Maseko's main references for the look of *Drum* were Schadeberg's photos from the 1950s. The German artist, who still lives in South Africa and visited the set, provided the production with thousands of stills. According to Rinzler, the filmmakers also reviewed two documentaries, *Come Back, Africa* and *Sophiatown*.

Drum was shot in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio in Johannesburg in the fall of 2003, almost entirely on location. (One set was built in a warehouse.) All camera and lighting equipment was rented from Sasani Studios. Rinzler shot the picture with a Moviecam Compact Zeiss Ultra Primes, a 16mm Zeiss, an Angenieux 25-250mm HR T3.5 (11:1) zoom, and a 400mm Canon lens. She filmed interiors and night scenes on Kodak Vision2 500T 5218, and day exteriors on Eastman EXR 100T 5248.

Much of the film's action takes place in the magazine office, a set that was constructed on the first floor of a vacant school building. To vary the look of the space from time to time, Rinzler played with focal lengths and camera angles, and she also suggested filming at different times of day and night. The room featured a lot of windows, including a bank of them along an entire wall, and the glass was covered by bars that could not be removed. "The bars actually gave us better cutting possibilities," notes Rinzler. "Without them, we would've been stuck with big, white blocks of blown-out windows."

"We rigged fluorescents in the ceiling and put incandescent tungsten lamps on the desks," she adds, "but only at night did we motivate the light by practicals. All day scenes relied on [real or re-created] sunlight coming through the windows, along with a few hidden units on the floor

[for fill]."

Working with 12K HMIs positioned outside the windows, Rinzler occasionally went with hard light, which created distinctive shapes and shadows on the walls. At other times, she added diffusion to create a softer look. "We used 250 diffusion on the lights and on a huge frame, and sometimes we used double layers of it. Sometimes we went hard on the background but not in the foreground."

The 2,000-square-foot space, which consisted of a communal newsroom and Bailey's small, glass-enclosed corner office, offered considerable depth, and Rinzler took advantage of it. One scene consists of a 45-second dolly shot across the width of the room, as the main characters talk by telephone to different parts of the world. "The lighting for that scene was motivated by window light," recalls Rinzler. "We filmed it in one shot and tried to play the depth of



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the room by going from character to character at various planes. The shot ends on Henry.

"We frequently tried to do that — have one character take us to another, or have one character go from the foreground to the background. Even on close-ups of Henry in Bailey's office, you can always see the outer office and sense the depth and activity. We wanted the viewer to feel that office around Henry whenever we were in there."

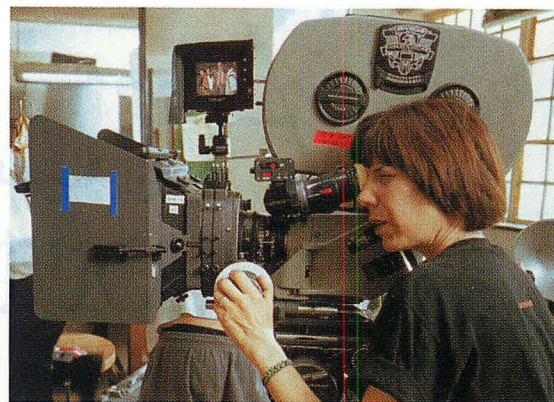
Given the production's low budget and short schedule, the cameras had to roll no matter what the weather. For day exteriors at the slave-labor farm where Henry goes undercover, Rinzler relied solely on natural light. "We couldn't stop shooting, so you see a lot of different weather conditions," she notes with a laugh.

For a night-exterior scene that shows Henry talking to a co-worker outside *Drum's* office, the filmmakers

wanted rain but couldn't afford to create it. As if by magic, the sky opened up at the right time and produced a downpour. Rinzler used a 6K to throw "a nice little backlight into the rain so we could see it."

Rinzler's gaffer, Alan Smith, was able to join her for the shoot, but the rest of her crew consisted of locals. Despite the various levels of expertise, she was pleased with the team. "Key grip Robertson Nkwana — I called him Prince Robbie — was especially terrific, as was focus puller Amelia Henning." She also praises best boy electrician Pedro Poss, extras wrangler Rodney Smith, and Bolo Mann, the production's liaison with the community of Kiptown, where the crowd scenes were shot.

Rinzler says the most difficult part of the shoot was seeing the conditions in which the people of Kiptown still live, 10 years after the end of apartheid. The majority of the



Cinematographer Lisa Rinzler lines up a shot in the magazine's office.

town has no running water or electricity. "It was hard seeing people struggling, but they live there with a lot of pride. They might have been missing basic amenities, but most of the houses were well set up and clean."

The era depicted in *Drum*, she concludes, "was such an interesting mix — it was a time of strife and incredible hardship for blacks, but they counteracted that with an incredible love of life."

— Jean Oppenheimer

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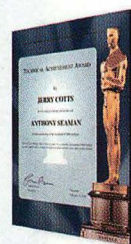
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Artistry for the Ages



The ASC and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences salute the top cinematographers from 2004.

A total of 22 top-notch directors of photography were saluted at this year's ASC and Academy Award ceremonies, held on February 13 and February 27, respectively.

In the ASC's five competitive categories for outstanding cinematography in 2004, four individuals took home the prize for the first time: French cinematographer Bruno Delbonnel, AFC, who had

been nominated previously for *Amélie*, won the Theatrical Release Award for *A Very Long Engagement* (see AC Dec. '04); Jonathan Freeman, CSC, who had been nominated three times previously (for the miniseries *Taken*, the telefilm *Strange Justice*, and the series *Prince Street*), won the MOW/Miniseries/Pilot-Network TV Award for the telefilm *Homeland Security*; Nathan Hope, a first-time

Photo by Jared Jordan.

Front row, left to right: Thomas Del Ruth, ASC; Tonino Delli Colli, AIC; ASC President Richard P. Crudo; Leonard Maltin; Peter Levy, ASC, ACS; Caleb Deschanel, ASC; Fred Koenekamp, ASC; Jonathan Freeman, CSC. Second row, left to right: Kramer Morgenthau; Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS; PJ Raval; Paul Cameron; Larry Fong; Michael Goi, ASC; David Boyd. Third row, left to right: Richard Moore, ASC; ASC Awards Chairman Owen Roizman; Clark Mathis; Ben Nott, ACS; Kees Van Oostrum, ASC; Chris Manley; Anthony Cappello (accepting for Pawel Edelman, PSC).

nominee, won the Regular Series Award for the "Down the Drain" episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*; and Paul James Raval won the Charles B. Lang Heritage Award for the student film *Wake* (see Short Takes, p. 89). In the MOW/Miniseries/Pilot-Basic or Pay TV category, Robbie Greenberg, ASC took home an ASC Award for the third time, in recognition of his work on the telefilm *Iron Jawed Angels*. He had previously earned the prize for the telefilms *Winchell* and *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*.

Before presenting the Theatrical Release award, actor Alec Baldwin aptly summarized the criteria that ASC members applied to their voting. "Each of the nominees has earned the respect of their peers for their artful and skillful rendering of images that accurately reflect the spirit of the stories they tell," he said. "Each successfully interpreted the intentions of the directors and performances of the cast in ways that allow audiences to embrace the story."

The ASC also paid tribute to five men with special awards: cinematographer Fred J. Koenekamp, ASC with the Lifetime Achievement Award; Italian cinematographer Tonino Delli Colli, AIC with the International Award; film historian and critic Leonard Maltin with an Award of Distinction; cinematographer and Panavision co-founder Richard Moore, ASC with the Presidents Award; and director/producer Gilbert Cates with the Board

Nominees for the 19th Annual ASC Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography: 2004

*denotes winner

Movie of the Week, Miniseries or Pilot (Basic or Pay Television)

Alan Caso, ASC, *Frankenstein* (pilot)

Robbie Greenberg, ASC, *Iron Jawed Angels**

Peter Levy, ASC, ACS, *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*

Ben Nott, ACS, *Salem's Lot*

Kees Van Oostrum, ASC, *Spartacus*

Movie of the Week, Miniseries or Pilot (Network Television)

Larry Fong, *Lost* (pilot)

Jonathan Freeman, CSC, *Homeland Security**

Michael Goi, ASC, *Judas*

Clark Mathis, *Medical Investigation* (pilot)

Kramer Morgenthau, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

Regular Series

David Boyd, *Deadwood*, "Deep Water"

Thomas A. Del Ruth, ASC, *The West Wing*, "Gaza"

**Nathan Hope, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*,
"Down the Drain"***

Chris Manley, *CSI: NY*, "A Man a Mile"

Alik Sakharov, ASC, *The Sopranos*, "Long Term Parking"

Theatrical Release

Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS and Paul Cameron, *Collateral*

Bruno Delbonnel, AFC, *A Very Long Engagement**

Caleb Deschanel, ASC, *The Passion of the Christ*

Pawel Edelman, PSC, *Ray*

Robert Richardson, ASC, *The Aviator*

Nominees for the 77th Annual Academy Award for Best Cinematography

*denotes winner

Bruno Delbonnel, AFC, *A Very Long Engagement*

Caleb Deschanel, ASC, *The Passion of the Christ*

John Mathieson, BSC, *The Phantom of the Opera*

Robert Richardson, ASC, *The Aviator**

Xiaoding Zhao, *The House of Flying Daggers*

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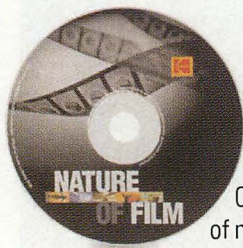
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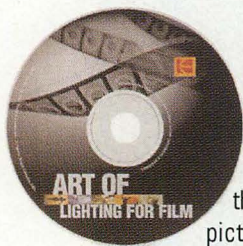
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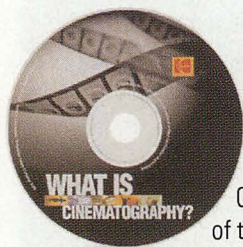
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Artistry for the Ages

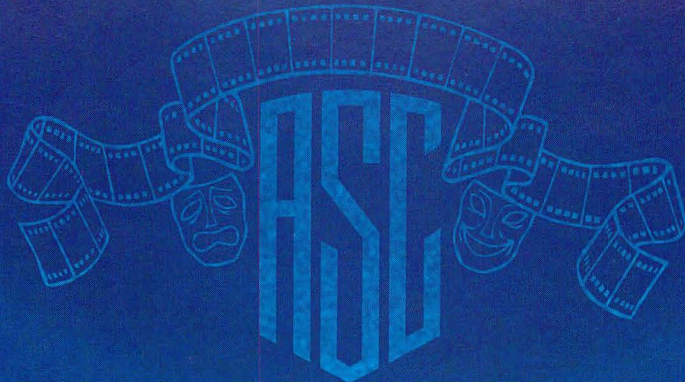
of Governors Award.

In addition to Baldwin, the evening's presenters included ASC members Allen Daviau, William A. Fraker and Woody Omens, as well as performers Debbie Allen, Alan Alda, Peter Fonda, Victor Garber, Kathryn Morris and Poppy Montgomery.

Two weeks later, Academy voters singled out Robert Richardson, ASC for his work on the epic Howard Hughes biopic *The Aviator* (AC Jan. '05). Richardson had previously won an Oscar for *JFK* and has earned three additional Academy nominations for *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Platoon*. He has now been nominated for an ASC Award seven times.

The ASC Awards weekend began on February 11, when all of the nominated cinematographers attended the annual nominees' dinner at the ASC Clubhouse in Hollywood. After the cocktail hour, attendees were treated to a sumptuous meal prepared by chef Audrey Kovacs (wife of Laszlo) and her staff from AKLA Catering.

The next afternoon, the Society hosted its annual open house. Hundreds of cinematography fans flocked to the Clubhouse to meet their idols, and many of the nominees participated in a live Internet chat with film buffs from around the world. ■



Festive Memories

The ASC celebrates cinematography during an eventful February weekend.

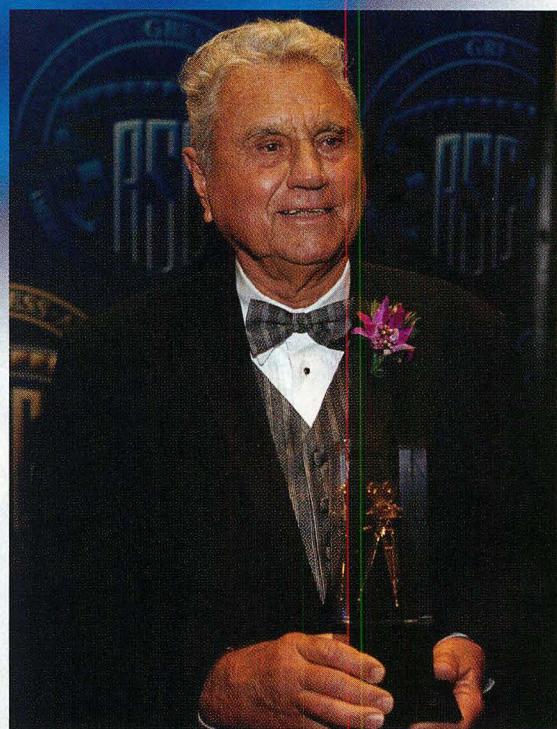
Contributing photographers: Glenn Cratty, Jared Jordan, Isidore Mankofsky, ASC and Chris Pizzello

The past, present and future of cinematography were celebrated in equal measure at the 19th Annual ASC Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography, a formal ceremony held in the Grand Ballroom at Hollywood & Highland on February 13. In his opening remarks to the event's 1,500 attendees, ASC President Richard Crudo noted that although the Society's roots date to 1919, "the mandate to be guardians of the motion-picture image as set down by our 12 founding fathers hasn't changed a bit." He added, "When you think of it, it's amazing they could be so forward-looking at a time when they were creating the art form as they went along."

The art form and the ASC continue to evolve, and Crudo noted

that the Society will take a bold step into the future in August 2005, when it will break ground for the ASC Technology and Education Center at 1782 North Orange Drive in Hollywood. Plans for the new structure, which will feature a state-of-the-art screening facility and offices for *American Cinematographer* and ASC administrators, were first announced in 2001. "While we may do things with the spontaneity of a moon launch," Crudo remarked dryly, "when we commit to something, we do it wholeheartedly, and we always do it right."

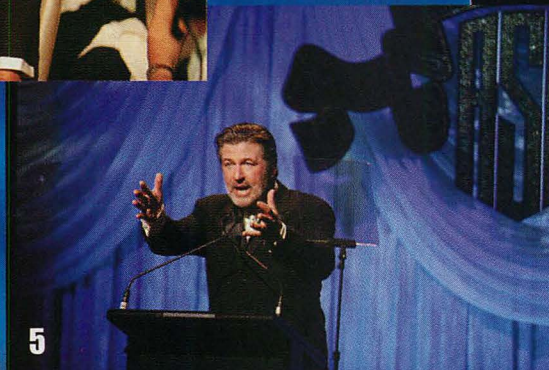
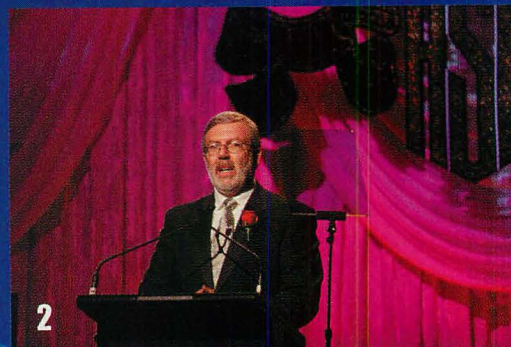
Following Crudo to the podium, ASC Awards Committee Chairman Owen Roizman reminded the assembled cinematographers and their guests that the real honor



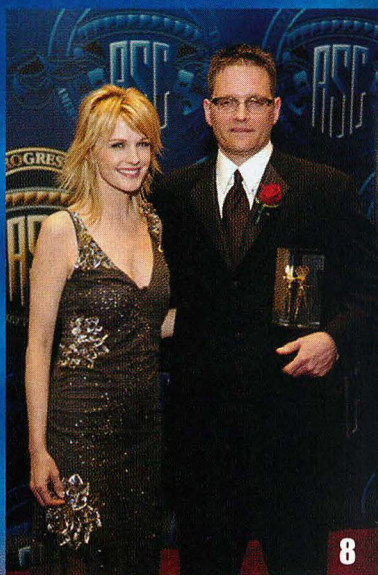
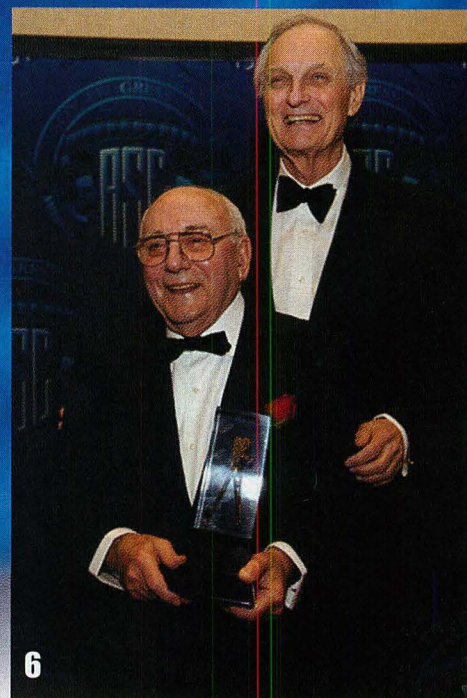
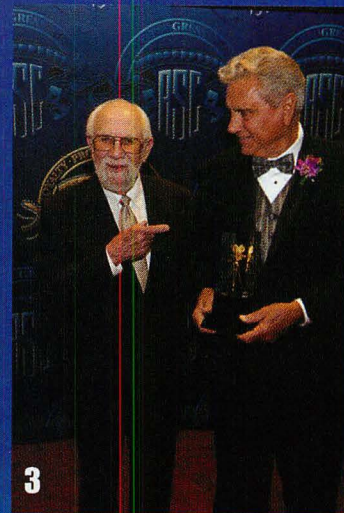
of the evening lay in the nominations: "This recognition comes from your peers, who I'd venture to say really know what they're looking at."

On the following pages, we offer a photographic recap of the awards, as well as shots taken at the nominees' dinner and the ASC open house.

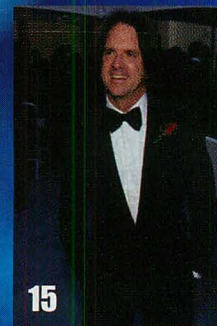
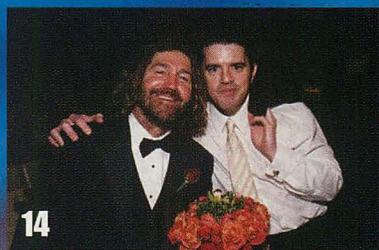
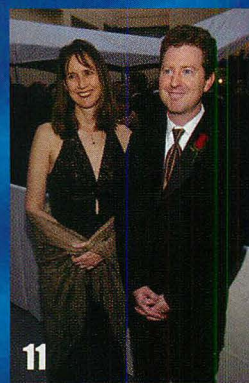
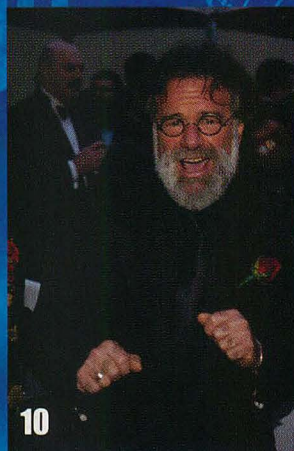
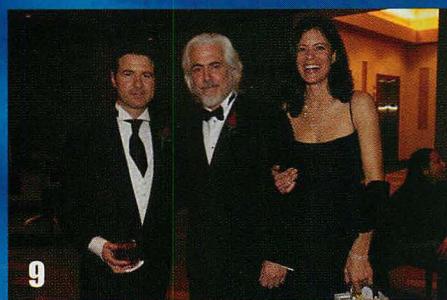
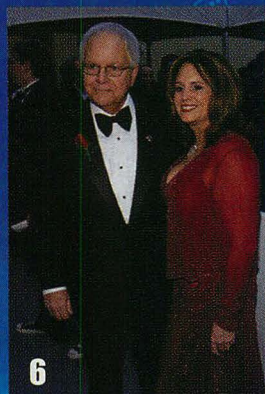
Fred J. Koenekamp, ASC, cradles his Lifetime Achievement Award.



1. Alan Alda leads the crowd's applause while introducing Tonino Delli Colli, AIC; 2. eminent journalist and film critic Leonard Maltin addresses the audience; 3. Delli Colli basks in the spotlight; 4. Allen Daviau, ASC imparts words of wisdom; 5. Alec Baldwin earns big laughs with his affectionate, dead-on impressions of Carlo Di Palma (*Alice*) and Robert Richardson, ASC while introducing the Theatrical Release category; 6. UTA agent Wayne Fitterman accepts the ASC Award for his client, Bruno Delbonnel, AFC, who was unable to attend the dinner but won the Theatrical Release award for *A Very Long Engagement*; 7. Richard Moore, ASC recalls memorable moments from his stellar career; 8. Victor Garber congratulates Robbie Greenberg, ASC, who earned top honors in the MOW/Miniseries/Pilot category (Basic or Pay Television) for *Iron Jawed Angels*.

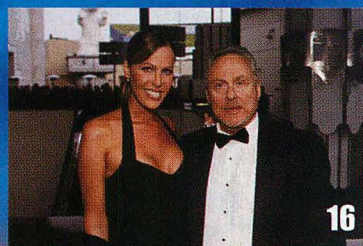
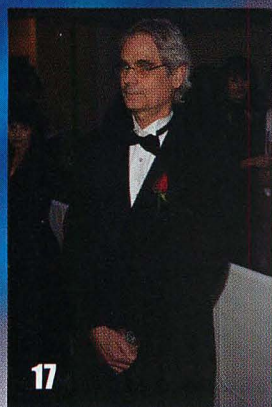
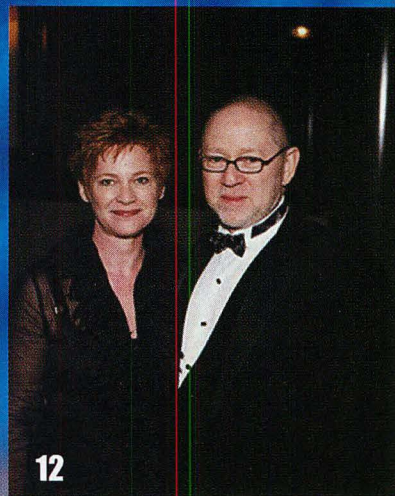
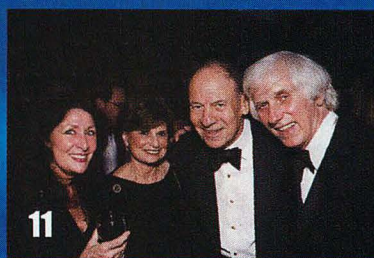
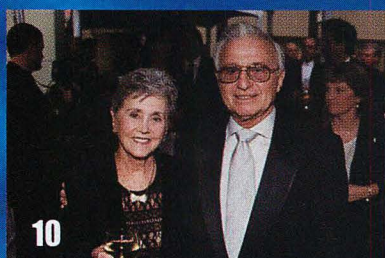
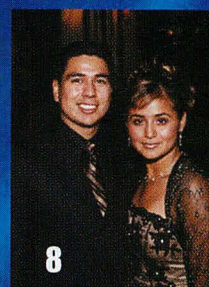
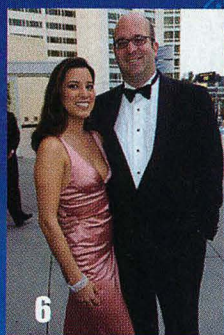
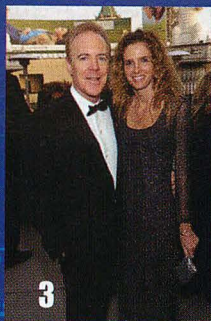


1. Woody Omens, ASC congratulates UT-Austin student PJ Raval, who won the Charles B. Lang Heritage Award for his short film *Wake*; 2. Maltin enjoys his moment; 3. William A. Fraker, ASC points to another great ASC cinematographer, Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Fred Koenekamp; 4. Poppy Montgomery guides Nathan Hope offstage after he won top honors in the Regular Series category (*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, "Down the Drain"); 5. Peter Fonda free-associates during his amusing introduction of Presidents Award recipient Richard Moore, ASC; 6. International Achievement Award honoree Tonino Delli Colli, AIC has the backing of actor Alan Alda; 7. Allen Daviau, ASC poses with Delli Colli and Maltin; 8. actress Kathryn Morris escorts Network Television MOW/Miniseries Pilot winner Jonathan Freeman, CSC (*Homeland Security*) toward the press.

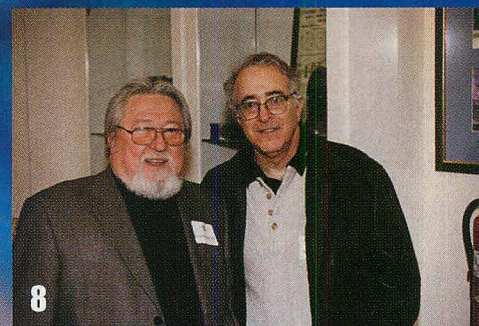
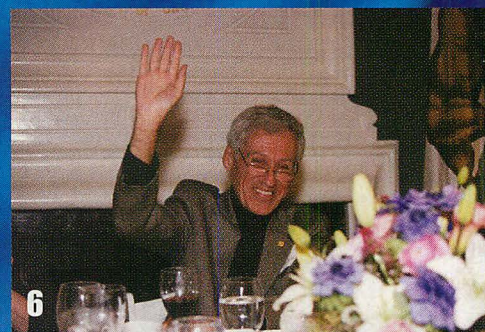
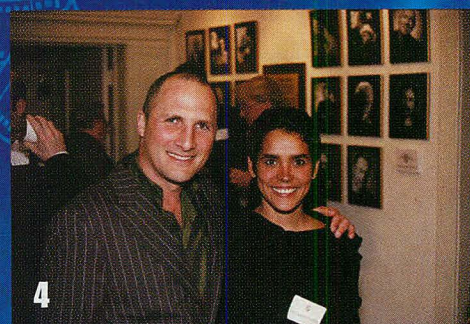
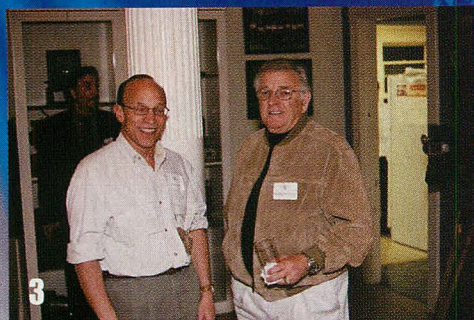


1. Kees Van Oostrum, ASC arrives with his wife, Ester Spitz, and their daughter, Sarah; 2. Russ Alsbrook, ASC enjoys a cocktail with his girlfriend, Peggy McClellan; 3. Ben Morgenthau flew into town to cheer on his brother, nominee Kramer

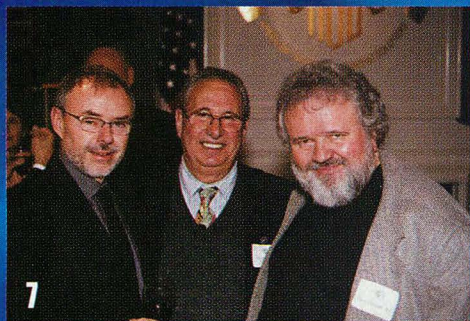
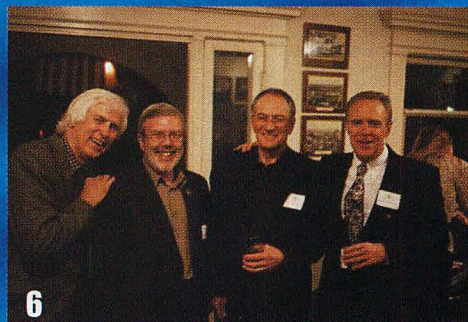
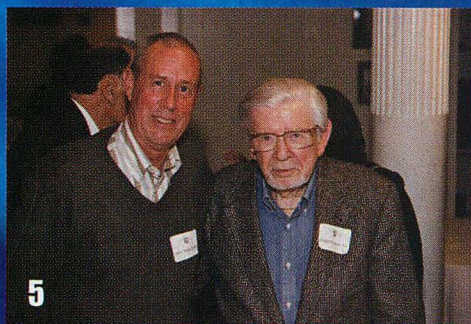
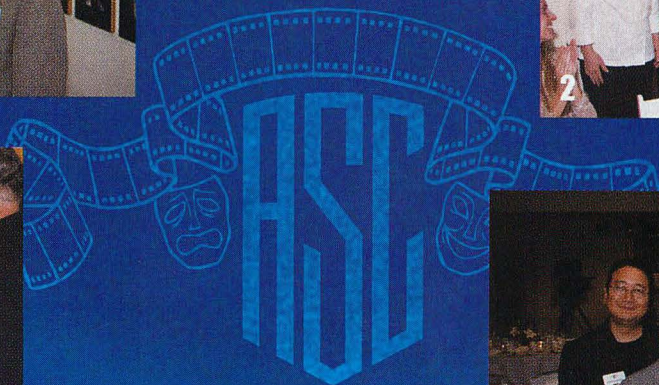
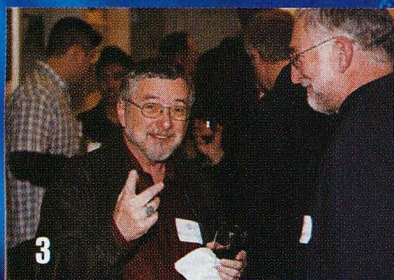
Morgenthau (*The Five People You Meet in Heaven*); 4. Papa-to-be Janusz Kaminski, ASC circles the VIP suite with his expectant wife, Rebecca Rankin; 5. Eric Roizman socializes with his parents, Mona and Owen; 6. Tom Del Ruth, ASC and his wife, Patty, survey the crowd; 7. Caleb Deschanel, ASC and his wife, Mary Jo, and daughter, Emily (far right) line up for a group shot with Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC and his wife, Susan; 8. nominee Chris Manley (*CSI: NY*, "A Man a Mile") and his wife, Bipasha Shom, make a photogenic pair; 9. Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS (*Collateral*) hobnobs with fellow nominee Robert Richardson, ASC (*The Aviator*) and Kati Haberstock; 10. Robbie Greenberg, ASC gets "Sunday Night Fever"; 11. nominee Clark Mathis (*Medical Investigation*) and Beth Szymkowski mingle; 12. Matthew Leonetti, ASC poses with his wife, MaryJane; 13. Ron Garcia, ASC makes an entrance with his wife, Peggy; 14. nominee David Boyd pals around with Aaron Schneider, ASC; 15. nominee Paul Cameron (*Collateral*) cuts a stylish figure; 16. Steve Gainer, ASC and his wife, Karen, glide through the throng; 17. Howard Anderson Jr., ASC, his daughter-in-law, Kathy, and her husband, Howard Anderson III, ASC, chat with John Hora, ASC; 18. beloved ASC caretaker Ben Toguchi is lookin' good as he parties with AC circulation manager Marvin (a.k.a. Alex) Lopez; 19. filmmaker Matthew Pearce and his wife, AC advertising coordinator Sanja Pearce, dress to impress.



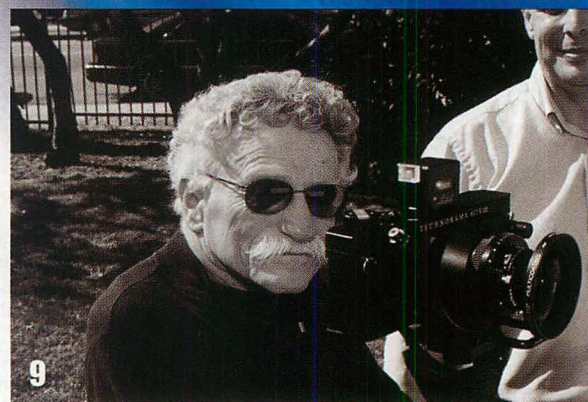
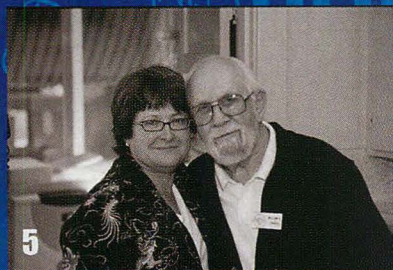
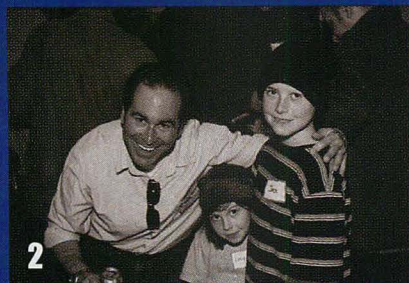
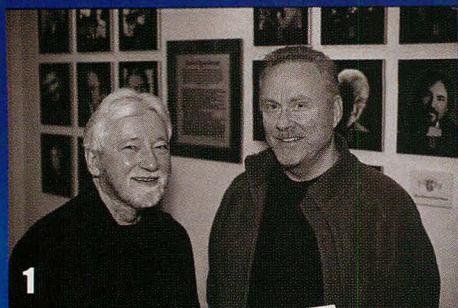
1. Producer/director Gilbert Cates, who recently supervised his 12th consecutive Academy Awards television broadcast, poses with his equally accomplished wife, Dr. Judith Reichman, before receiving the Board of Governors Award; 2. Robert Liu, ASC enjoys a moment of camaraderie with Bing Sokolsky, ASC; 3. ASC president Richard Crudo squires his date, Susan Derendorf; 4. nominees Robbie Greenberg, ASC and Peter Levy, ASC, ACS (*The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*) flank ASC Awards Chairman Owen Roizman; 5. Sol Negrin, ASC enjoys the evening with his spouse, Betty; 6. *American Cinematographer* executive editor Stephen Pizzello and his wife, ASC president's assistant Delphine Figueras, smile for the cameras; 7. nominee Michael Goi, ASC (*Judas*) hugs his girlfriend, Gina Bullock; 8. AC production assistant Erik Gonzalez socializes with his date, Flor Diaz; 9. nominee David Boyd (*Deadwood*, "Deep Water") makes the rounds with his wife, Lisa; 10. Victor Kemper, ASC and his wife, Claire, cut elegant figures; 11. Françoise and Douglas Kirkland flank their good friends Bud and Judy Stone; 12. Steven Poster, ASC and his wife, Susan, meet and greet guests; 13. nominee Larry Fong (*Lost*) pauses for his photo op; 14. Steadicam inventor and ASC associate member Garrett Brown catches up with Society stalwarts Owen Roizman and Haskell Wexler; 15. Russell Carpenter, ASC and his wife, Patty, enjoy the festive ambience; 16. Don McCuaig, ASC and his date, Karen Bertini, tour the new venue; 17. nominee Caleb Deschanel, ASC (*The Passion of the Christ*) scopes out the scene; 18. ASC vice president Daryn Okada and his wife, Cean, save a flower arrangement.



1. Fred Godfrey, Larry (Mole) Parker, Amelia Vincent, ASC and Russ Alsobrook, ASC have a fine time; 2. ASC members Richard Moore and Kees Van Oostrum ask Leonard Maltin for his review of the evening; 3. ASC associate member Frank Kay and Brad Six, ASC both rank as industry pillars; 4. nominee Kramer Morgenthau introduces his date, Victoria De La Paz; 5. Bruno Delbonnel, AFC thanks his hosts; 6. Woody Omens, ASC acknowledges some affectionate applause; 7. Kodak's Brian Spruill and ASC Awards Chairman Owen Roizman capture nominee Ben Nott, ACS (*Salem's Lot*), in their infamous "photo vise"; 8. Laszlo Kovacs, ASC catches up with Awards Committee member Bob Hoffman; 9. Spruill and Roizman put the squeeze on yet another nominee, Caleb Deschanel, ASC.



At the annual Nominees Dinner, held two days before the awards, 1. nominee Paul Cameron cozies up to ASC associate member Beverly Wood and Woody Omens, ASC; 2. chef Audrey Kovacs and her staff from AKLA Catering enjoy a round of applause for their superb cuisine; 3. Robert Primes, ASC entertains Stephen Lighthill, ASC with an anecdote; 4. Michael Goi, ASC shows his proud parents, Matsuo and Kikuno, the ASC's "wall of presidents"; 5. ASC associate member Larry (Mole) Parker stands shoulder to shoulder with Ralph Woolsey, ASC; 6. Douglas Kirkland and Leonard Maltin share a laugh with ASC Awards Chairman Owen Roizman and ASC President Richard Crudo; 7. ASC luminaries John Toll, George Spiro Dibie and Allen Daviau form a social circle; 8. Spruill and Roizman flank nominee Clark Mathis; 9. Spruill and Roizman bookend nominee Peter Levy, ASC, ACS.



1. ASC associate member Denny Clairmont chats with Don McCuaig, ASC; 2. John Schwartzman, ASC visits the Clubhouse with his children, Lucy and Jack; 3. Florence Omens and Theo Primes share a laugh with Victor Kemper, ASC; 4. Claire Kemper gets a hug from Dorothy Byrne; 5. *AC* publisher Martha Winterhalter snuggles up to Bill Fraker, ASC; 6. Bruno Delbonnel, AFC (center) participates in an online chat; 7. during the ASC's Open House the day before the awards, *AC* circulation assistant Evert Ortiz and circulation manager Marvin Lopez (foreground, backs to camera) chat with a guest while photographer Jared Jordan (on Clubhouse roof) captures an aerial view of the event; 8. Wally Pfister, ASC throws an arm around Paul Cameron; 9. Isidore Mankofsky, ASC takes up his familiar position behind a stills camera.

Honoring Ingenuity



The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented its annual Sci-Tech Awards on February 12 in Pasadena, California. Front row (left to right): Academy president Frank Pierson, David Samuelson, Alain Masseron, Tak Miyagishima, Scarlett Johansson, Arthur Widmer, Jean-Marie Lavalou, Horst Burbulla and Sci-Tech Awards Committee Chairman Richard Edlund, ASC. Middle row (l to r): Nelson Tyler, Steven E. Boze, David Mann, Paul Smyth, Ned Phipps, Alan Kapler, Keith Edwards, Bill Lorton, Wesley Wofford, Matthew Madden, Vaughn Cato, Nels Madsen and Jerry Cotts. Back row (l to r): Lindsay Arnold, Charlie Lawrence, Paul Tate, Michael Birch, Dr. John O.B. Greaves, William Hayes, Antonie J. van den Bogert, Ph.D., Gyula Mester, Greg Cannom, Dave Betts, Christopher Hicks, Anthony Seaman and Guy Griffiths.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences salutes the industry's technical wizards at its annual Sci-Tech Awards dinner.

by Stephen Pizzello

The motion-picture industry's most inventive minds were feted on February 12 at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' annual Sci-Tech Awards dinner, held at the Ritz-Carlton Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, California. Actress Scarlett Johansson served as hostess and did a creditable job pronouncing a variety of tongue-twisting technical terms.

The creators of two camera-crane systems received Academy

Awards of Merit (in the form of Oscar statuettes) for their groundbreaking inventions: Horst Burbulla, who created and developed the Technocrane; and Jean-Marie Lavalou, Alain Masseron and David Samuelson, for engineering and developing the Louma Camera Crane and Remote System. Also receiving an Academy statuette was Panavision's senior vice president of engineering, Tak Miyagishima, who earned the Gordon E. Sawyer Award for his lifetime of technological con-

Honoring Ingenuity

tributions to the industry.

The Academy also honored a number of other individuals for their brilliant thinking. A special Award of Commendation was presented to Arthur Widmer for his lifetime achievement in the science and technology of image compositing for motion pictures. In addition, the Academy's Board of Governors voted to award two Scientific and Engineering Awards, presented in the form of plaques, and nine Technical Achievement Awards, presented as certificates. All of these honors were based upon recommendations from the Scientific and Technical Awards Committee, chaired by Richard Edlund, ASC.

Awards Administration Director Rich Miller said that, unlike other Academy Awards, achievements receiving Scientific and Technical Awards did not have to have been developed and introduced during 2004. Devices are only considered for Sci-Tech Awards "if they have a proven track record of continued and successful use in the film industry," Miller said.

To be sure, Burbulla's invention of the Technocrane helped to redefine camera-crane technology. Like most seminal motion-picture inventions, the crane was born out of creative necessity. In 1981, at the age of 23, Burbulla was attempting to make his own narrative film and realized he needed a crane. He recalls, "During two years of work on my film, I built a simple camera arm consisting of just an aluminium arm with a remote head. The head was moved by wind-shield-wiper motors obtained from a scrapyard and controlled by transformers from a toy train. I put this homemade camera crane to work during 60 days of shooting in Iceland and in my homemade film studio in Bonn, Germany.

"While working with the crane, I realized that something was missing in traditional camera cranes: not one crane could move a camera through a window, across a table or around an

actor without two grips pushing the one-ton crane. It was clear to me that a crane whose beam sections could move in and out would be a great tool for every cameraman and director. So I bought myself drawing paper and a pencil and drew up four beam sections with moving counterweights. Thus, the concept of the first telescopic crane was born."

After several attempts at building a prototype, Burbulla settled on a "half-telescopic" design that allowed the length of the crane to be adjusted by hand. This early version was built with the help of a mechanical workshop in Bonn, and Burbulla later sold the half-telescopic crane to the Rome-based company Technovision. It was subsequently used for the first time in Spain on the feature film *Flesh and Blood*, shot by Jan De Bont, ASC.

In the spring of 1986, Burbulla signed a rental contract with Technovision for five additional half-telescopic cranes, and the proceeds from the deal allowed him to build his "dream crane": a fully telescopic, 20-foot version that was available by September of that year.

During the late 1980s, Technovision introduced the telescopic cranes into the English film and television industries and then the European movie industry. In recounting the history of his invention, Burbulla reserved special praise for Henryk Crockicki, the owner of Technovision, whom he describes as "a very innovative man who strongly supported the development of the telescopic camera crane." He also credits Technocrane operator Simon Jays for introducing the Technocrane to the Hollywood industry in 1989.

In 1990, Burbulla moved his company from Bonn to Plzen in the Czech Republic, and that facility now employs 65 people. Subsequent developments have included the SuperTechnocrane, which extended the original crane's length to 30'; the SuperTechno 50, which can lift a

camera up to 50' and has a telescoping speed of 6' per second; the Techno15, a light and small telescopic crane that can be disassembled and put back together in just 15 minutes; the Technodolly, which Burbulla says can "repeat camera movements regardless of how long and how complicated they are"; and the SupertechnoTV Technocrane, a lighter, faster version of the telescoping crane.

The Louma Camera Crane, which has also served as the inspiration for many subsequent remote-camera systems, sprang from creative need as well. In 1970, Jean-Marie Lavalou and Alain Masseron were two young French documentary cameramen making a film inside a submarine. They wanted to do a tracking shot down the length of the ship, passing through bulkheads and jibbing sideways to show various crew members working at their stations. The camera also had to pass through openings and gaps between instruments until it ended up in the forward torpedo compartment, where off-duty crew members would be shown taking a meal break while sitting on either side of a long table surrounded by torpedoes.

The two filmmakers achieved the desired shot by mounting the camera on a Sachtler gyro head attached to the end of a long pole. The pole itself was mounted on a heavy-duty gyro tripod head that was attached to a narrow dolly, which was rolled on narrow tracks laid along the entire length of the submarine (and high enough above the floor to clear the thresholds of the bulkheads they had to pass through). When the camera reached the forward torpedo compartment, and just before it reached the final bulkhead, one of the two cameramen began using the gyro head to tilt the camera down; when it had passed through the opening, the other man emerged from the space and kept the move going.

Lavalou and Masseron realized that they had the genesis of a very useful piece of equipment, so they took their idea to the leading camera rental company in Paris, Samuelson Alga

Cinema, which agreed to give them support and the use of their engineering facilities. Second and third prototypes were made in France, where the concept was developed and improved. When the time came to make drawings and to manufacture a limited number of pre-production versions, the project was brought to Samuelson Film Service Ltd. in London, a facility that had a much larger design, development and manufacturing department. There, David Samuelson and the two Frenchmen worked out a range of additional features, including a video-assist viewfinder system; an electronic, remote pan-and-tilt system with hand wheels that would emulate a normal geared head; remote lens-focus and zoom controls; a witness camera to aid remote lens control; an intercom system; and a control console and a custom-designed dolly. (The design and development of the geared head's electronics and the other electronic features was handled in Paris by Hervé Theys of Samuelson Alga Cinema. Also contributing to the innovations was Britain's Joe Dunton, who worked on the Louma's video system.)

The advantages of the new camera crane system were myriad. Never before had it been possible to dismantle a crane into portable pieces (which allowed it to be set up and used in locations that had previously been inaccessible or unsuitable for heavy equipment), or to dip a camera down into a set and make 360° pans.

Lavalou credits Steven Poster, ASC with helping to introduce the Louma Crane to the Hollywood industry. Poster, who had served as second-unit director of photography on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, brought the device to the attention of Steven Spielberg, who subsequently used it on the film *1941* — which earned an Oscar nomination for its cinematographer, William A. Fraker, ASC.

Lavalou says he and his partners "were on Cloud 9" when they were told by Sci-Tech Committee member Bill Taylor, ASC that they would receive

Academy Awards for their invention. He also told AC that their company, Loumasystems, is hoping to have its next big advance in crane technology, the Louma 2, ready to go on productions in the upcoming months. The new telescoping crane boasts an array of promising features. Like the original Louma, it can be disassembled for easy transport, but the Louma 2 is computer-controlled, which will allow its operators to coordinate any axis of camera movement (pan, tilt, roll, telescope, etc.) with any other axis. According to Lavalou, this can be used to make the crane's arm traverse a straight line between any two points, without any of the arc typically associated with crane movement. "The coordination between the pan of the arm and the telescoping movement means that you can create an instant 'virtual tracking move' in a straight line of up to 58 feet," he reveals. "You can also coordinate the telescoping arm with the focus, which will allow for the creation of some very tricky and difficult shots. The crane's software can be programmed in any number of ways, so the possibilities will be endless."

Samuelson, a BSC and SMPTE member who is also an ASC associate (as well as an occasional columnist for AC), has been taking great relish in his Academy Award, which made him a bit of a celebrity on his flight home to London. "I had the Oscar in my carry-on bag — naturally, it was too precious to put in the plane's hold — and at some point its head popped out. One of the cabin crew noticed this, and word carried quickly 'round the entire crew, who were virtually queueing up to take a peep. Then, in the middle of the night, the chief steward invited me to have a drink in the first-class lounge bar, and asked me if he could borrow the Oscar and show it to the captain."

"Everyone who picks up an

Oscar says exactly the same thing," Samuelson observed. "Isn't it heavy?"

Widmer received his Award of Commendation in recognition of his significant contributions to the development of the Ultra Violet Traveling Matte and "bluescreen" compositing processes. He began his career in Eastman Kodak's research laboratory, where he became interested in photography and helped to introduce Eastman Color Negative and Color Positive to the industry in the late 1940s. Later, while working as a "jack of all trades" in the technical department at Warner Bros., he spearheaded the development of the Ultra Violet system and also refined other motion-picture processes, including 3-D and widescreen. During a subsequent stint at Universal Studios, where he served as technical director of the optical laboratory, Widmer helped researched many developments in bluescreen technology and made improvements to the Color Difference System. He retired in 1979. Reflecting upon his Sci-Tech recognition, Widmer expressed his feeling with undue modesty: "It's a very distinguished and unusual honor, and I feel that there are a lot of people who deserve it more than I do, but I'm still very pleased."

Miyagishima, this year's recipient of the Gordon E. Sawyer Award, has been with Panavision since 1955. During his tenure, Panavision has been honored with two Academy Awards of Merit (in 1978 for the Panaflex Motion Picture System and in 1994 for the Anamorphic Taking System) and many Sci-Tech Awards. He has also contributed to the development of the company's Anamorphic Projection Systems, Ultra Panavision (a 65mm Anamorphic Taking System), Super Panavision (a 65mm Spherical Taking System), Panavision 35, the Primo series of lenses and many other innovations. An associate member of the ASC, Miyagishima serves on the Society's Technology Committee, and is also a member of the SMPTE Projection Technology Committee, the Working Group on Telecine Practices and others.

Honoring Ingenuity

He has served on the Sci-Tech Awards Committee, and has received numerous other honors for his work, including the Fuji Gold Medal Award, the ASC Presidents Award, the Academy's John A. Bonner Medal of Commendation and an Emmy from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

After receiving his Oscar statuette, Miyagishima demonstrated humility and good humor in his acceptance speech, telling the crowd, "My son humbled me when he said, 'Dad, you've been working so long that they had to give you something, and this is it.' I hope that doesn't mean you're getting rid of me!"

With a wry smile, he added that after he'd served at Panavision for several years, he kept hearing rumors about the impending death of film from various industry associates. "They said film was going to go away in five years. Well, it's been 10 more glorious 'five more years,' and here's to many more 'five more years.'"

On that hopeful note, we present a list of the evening's other award recipients, along with the Academy's explanations of each honor.

SCIENTIFIC AND ENGINEERING AWARDS

(Academy Plaque)

To **Gyula Mester** (electronic systems design) and **Keith Edwards** (mechanical engineering) for their significant contributions to and continuing development of the Technocrane telescoping camera crane.

With its electronically driven leveling head, adjustable moveable weight carriage, and lightweight, extremely precise telescoping beam elements that allow camera movement during shots, the Technocrane has redefined the state of the art in camera-crane technology.

To **Lindsay Arnold, Guy Griffiths, David Hodson, Charlie Lawrence** and **David Mann** for their

development of the Cineon Digital Film Workstation.

Cineon pioneered a commercial node-graph compositing system that established a new visual method for direct manipulation of the compositing process, which influenced and defined modern digital compositing workflows.

TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

(Academy Certificate)

To **Greg Cannom** and **Wesley Wofford** for the development of their special modified silicone material for makeup applications used in motion pictures.

This proprietary modified silicone makeup system allows for the creation of either partial or full-face appliances for motion-picture makeup effects that move like real flesh, have translucency similar to skin and will accept standard makeup materials.

To **Jerry Cotts** for the original concept and design and **Anthony Seaman** for the engineering of the Satelight-X HMI Softlight.

With its large radiating surface and thin profile, this collapsible, self-contained HMI softlight provides a diffuse light to simulate daylight in location interiors, where space is often limited.

To **Steven E. Boze** for the design and implementation of the DNF 001 multi-band digital audio noise suppressor.

Designed in the early 1990s when digital signal processing was in its early stages, the real-time digital approach of the DNF 001 provided accurate filter response with minimal interaction, allowing noise attenuation with fewer artifacts.

To **Dr. Christopher Hicks** and **Dave Betts** for the design and implementation of the Cedar DNS 1000 multi-band digital noise suppressor.

The Cedar DNS 1000 is specifically designed to reduce background noise from recorded motion-picture dialogue. With its precise filters it allows the frequency ranges to be altered or even cas-

caded to pinpoint and reduce the offending noise.

To **Nelson Tyler** for the development of the Tyler Gyroplatform boat-mount stabilizing device for motion-picture photography.

As a pioneer in this area of motion-picture technology, Tyler's two-axis, hydraulically-powered camera mount successfully eliminates the pitch and roll associated with camera shots taken from a boat in the water.

To **Dr. Julian Morris, Michael Birch, Dr. Paul Smyth** and **Paul Tate** for the development of the Vicon motion-capture technology. *Vicon Motion Systems developed special-purpose cameras for motion capture with software systems that maximized their impact on the motion-picture industry.*

To **Dr. John O. B. Greaves, Ned Phipps, Antonie J. van den Bogert** and **William Hayes** for the development of the Motion Analysis motion-capture technology.

Motion Analysis Corporation developed special-purpose cameras for motion capture with software systems that maximized their impact on the motion-picture industry.

To **Dr. Nels Madsen, Vaughn Cato, Matthew Madden** and **Bill Lorton** for the development of the Giant Studios motion-capture technology.

The software solution created by Giant Studios applied a unique biometric approach that has influenced the development of motion-capture technology for motion pictures.

To **Alan Kapler** for the design and development of Storm, a software toolkit for artistic control of volumetric effects.

"Storm" employs an efficient method for directly manipulating volumetric data to create effects such as clouds, water and avalanches with familiar operators inspired by image-compositing and painting operations. ■

Short Takes

UT-Austin Student Earns ASC Heritage Award

by Stephanie Argy

Every year, the American Society of Cinematographers presents its Heritage Award to one or more promising film-school students or recent graduates. The award, intended to preserve the memory of renowned ASC members, is named for a different person each year. This year's award, dedicated to Charles B. Lang Jr., ASC, went to PJ Raval, who was recognized for his cinematography on the 17-minute film *Wake*.

The movie, made as a student project at the University of Texas-Austin, tells the story of a five-year-old Korean girl whose mother dies in her sleep one night. The little girl is unable to understand what has happened, and for the next five days, she stays in or near the apartment with her mother's body, waiting in vain for her to wake up.

UT-Austin requires its students to make their own films and learn about every aspect of filmmaking, rather than specializing in a particular craft. In the first year of the graduate program, students take courses in all different disciplines, and in their second and third years, they concentrate on making their own films. "You end up graduating with two projects, as well as smaller ones from your first year," says Raval, who is also a director.

Still, Raval gained a lot of experience in cinematography at UT-Austin, largely because he came into the program with a strong background in photography. During his undergraduate years at the University of California-San Diego, he initially studied molecular biology and visual arts. When he ran out of photography classes to take, he signed up for a film production and history class taught by French filmmaker Babette



Left: In *Wake*, which won the 2004 ASC Heritage Award, a 5-year-old girl awakens one morning to discover that her mother is dead, only the girl doesn't quite understand what death is.

Below: Cinematographer P.J. Raval blocks out a dolly shot. "We wanted the camera movement to suggest someone lurking, waiting for the stillness to break, so I was on a dolly for the entire shoot," he says.

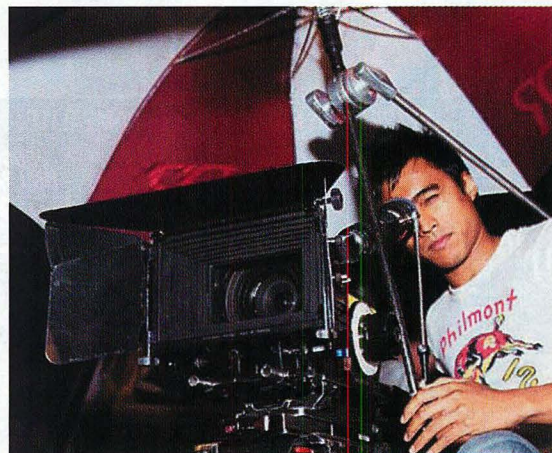
Mangolte. "She taught, encouraged and inspired me," he says. He found another supporter at UT-Austin when cinematographer Nancy Schiesari saw some of his photographs and began urging other students to have him shoot their projects.

The director of *Wake*, Keun-Pyo Park, had appeared as an actor in one of the films Raval directed, and the two have been regular collaborators, so it was a natural move for Raval to shoot Park's film. "It was a huge honor, because I really admire him," says Raval. "He's a very visual filmmaker, and that's a cinematographer's dream."

From the beginning, Park knew he wanted *Wake* to be very controlled, with long, fluid takes. He and Raval worked through the script together, sketching shots that would let them explore the experience of time, stretching out the hours and days to convey the little girl's solitude. "It was actually a very easy process to visualize the film,"

Raval remembers. "Something about the way Keun-Pyo wrote and described it made it easy for me to find images that would match the tone."

Wake stars a 5-year-old girl named Eun Jee Wang, who is in every scene — alone most of the time — and must therefore carry the entire movie. While the crew was initially apprehensive about what it would be like to work



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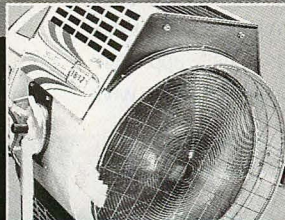
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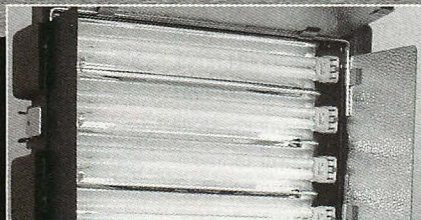


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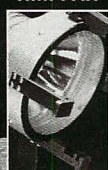
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with a child so young, Raval says that she was amazing. "Keun-pyo had met her in a church," he says, noting that while the set was bilingual, Park spoke mainly Korean to the girl as he guided her through the character's journey.

Not surprisingly, the project's schedule was a big concern. "We had to be careful about not packing too much in," Raval says. "We wanted to avoid working our young actress into the ground." Moreover, to help the girl comprehend her character's emotional journey, the movie was shot in chronological order, something that Raval feels eventually made Eun Jee herself reach a deeper understanding about death and loss.

Raval says that the first shot of the movie made him realize that he was working on a unique and interesting production. The shot starts on a window, with wind gently blowing the sheer curtain in front of it. The camera pulls back over the mother lying motionless in bed, then farther back to reveal the entire room, including the little girl, who sits on the floor watching television. While the shot seems as though it was done on a crane with a long arm, it was in fact done on a dolly; as the camera pulled back, people scrambled to arrange things in the dolly's wake. "It was a challenging shot, and because it was the first of both the production and the film itself, it set the style," Raval observes.

To convey the tone he was after, Park showed Raval some classic films by Andrei Tarkovsky. As the pair made *Wake*, they considered one night scene to be an overt homage to the Russian director: a dream sequence in which the mother, who has lain in the same position all through the movie, slowly turns over. As a spotlight comes up on her, her stomach swells up. "We were trying to get her to appear natural as she turned, while at the same time doing a live lighting change," explains Raval. "It was a very stylized way to convey that tone and feeling."

Raval shot *Wake* on Super 16mm using school equipment, including an Arri 16SR-2 with Zeiss prime

lenses. For the most part, he used a 12mm lens, keeping the shots wide as much as possible. "A lot of the story's drama is generated by the girl's relationship with her surroundings, so we wanted to show a lot of that environment as she interacts with it," he says. "It's so still, and there's lingering death."

Raval mainly used Eastman Kodak Vision 320T 7277 stock, which he chose because he felt that it handles soft, warm lighting really well. For the few exterior scenes, he used Eastman Kodak Vision 200T 7274.

The movie takes place over the course of five days, including mornings, afternoons, evenings and night. Raval opted to simulate the look of these different times with filtration rather than dramatic lighting changes. Working with a range of coral filters, he would warm up the look as each day advanced, progressing from no filtration to half coral and then full. To keep the look clean and sharp, he used no diffusion on the lens.

The shoot for *Wake* took place on UT-Austin's soundstage, where set designer In Seung Park, a graduate student in the school's theater department, built the entire apartment in which the girl and her mother live. The art department initially painted the apartment walls in warm brown tones, but shortly before the shoot, they repainted them, shifting the hues toward blues and grays. "Since I was using warm filtration on the lens, we decided to go more neutral," says Raval, explaining that this choice gave him far more control over the setting. "It's much more interesting than having too much of the same thing. With the blues and grays, when you don't have the filtration, it becomes a much cooler palette. When you have the filtration, it's much warmer."

Park had shown Raval various paintings with soft window lighting that he liked, and Raval tried to emulate that look by using 2K and 5K tungsten lights aimed through the windows, usually passing through some kind of silk. The light was also being filtered through the sheer curtains on the windows, making

it even softer. The cinematographer notes that his goal was to try to keep everything softly lit from behind. "I'm a big fan of three-quarter back soft lighting," he says. Because he was controlling the color palette with his filters, Raval left the lights clean, except for the silks and a little CTB that he applied for a few night scenes.

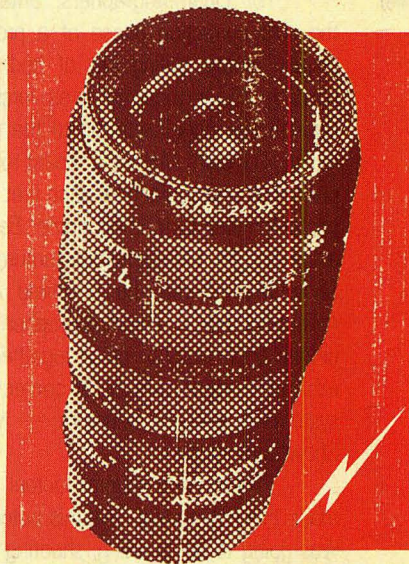
Almost all of *Wake* is shot static from a tripod or from a dolly moving so slowly that the frame appears still. At the end of the film, however, there is one handheld scene. By that point in the story, the girl has grown so malnourished that she sees a hallucination of her mother in their kitchen, then collapses from hunger. "It syncs up really nicely with the emotional trajectory of the film, where she's longing for her mother to the point where she thinks that she might see her," says Raval.

Wake was processed at FotoKem in Burbank and then transferred to video at Match Frame in Austin, Texas, with Raval supervising the color correction by Joe Malina. Park edited the movie himself on a school Avid, finishing on MiniDV. Eventually, though, he and Raval may make a DigiBeta or high-definition version.

This year, Raval has two films playing at the Cannes Film Festival — *Wake* (which was recently picked up by a Korean distributor) and a feature called *Room*. He has already shot a second feature, *Gretchen*, directed by Steve Collins. But while *Wake* has brought Raval a lot of attention, he is careful to point out that his cinematography was only one aspect of the entire production. "I've gotten a lot of compliments on how it looks, but it looks that great because the acting is great, the production design is great, and the dolly work is great," says Raval. "I have to share a lot of the credit with everyone else who worked on the project." ■

STATE OF THE ART RENTALS

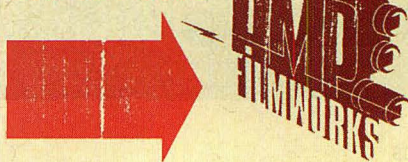
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Post Focus

Molly (Vinessa Shaw, right) is torn between the memories of her dead husband the urge to date again in the Showtime film *Bereft*. Cinematographer Clark Mathis (below) built a system around Apple Final Cut Pro in a spare bedroom so that he could finish the high-definition production at home.



Household Post

by Douglas Bankston

For cinematographers, entering the color-correction phase of a project usually means rolling out of bed and wasting 45 or more minutes lurching through Los Angeles traffic to the post facility. For Clark Mathis, it meant rolling out of bed and strolling 20 or so feet to a postproduction suite in his home. *Bereft*, a low-budget, high-definition feature for Showtime, offered the two-time ASC Award-nominated cinematographer the unique opportunity to piece together an editing/compositing/color-correction system in a spare bedroom — with Showtime's blessing.

"There were several factors that made this setup ideal," Mathis notes. "I was going to be directing, shooting and editing *Bereft*, and the budget could benefit from a very streamlined, low-cost

postproduction solution. At the same time, the project's low budget allowed Showtime to very graciously take more of a risk without taking a huge financial gamble if I wasn't able to pull it off."

Shot on location in Vermont, *Bereft* is a drama about a widow struggling to re-enter the dating scene. The project stars Vinessa Shaw, Tim Blake Nelson and Timothy Daly (who co-directed with Mathis). The time between the show's "greenlight" and the start of production in August 2003 was short, leaving Mathis with only a couple of weeks to research and construct a system with an adequate workflow. Factoring into his component decisions was the choice of shooting formats: 8-bit 1080p/24p HDCam. Mathis had been using Apple's Final Cut Pro to cut his demo reel, so when Version 4 was released with the ability to handle 1080p/24p in the timeline, he purchased a turnkey system with FCP 4. "It's not the ideal, highest-quality platform," he says about the 8-bit-capable software, "but in this instance, it had matured just enough to give us entry into both broadcast and filmout on a shoestring budget."

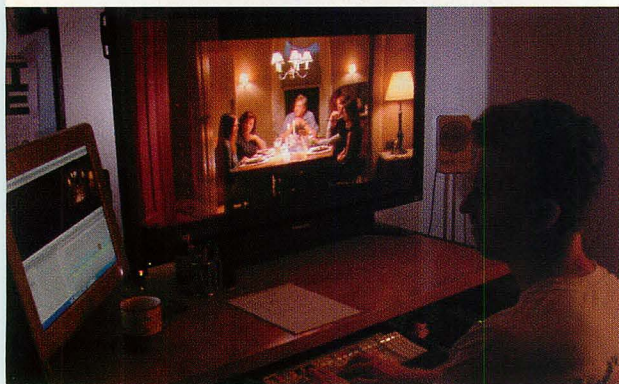
FCP 4 would serve as an editing system, a compositor for minor work as needed, and as a color-corrector with a secondary color-correction function. The software was loaded into a dual 1.42 GHz Mac G4. Pinnacle Cinewave high- and standard-definition cards, and their corre-

sponding breakout boxes would facilitate the input/output of the digital footage. HDCam footage eats up a lot of storage space, so Mathis opted for a 960GB Medea RTRX RAID storage array. "I wanted to make sure that technically, it was beyond reproach in terms of standards and quality control," he says. "I didn't want Showtime to worry."

Working with Mathis in Vermont, co-editor Karen Castañeda took delivery of the equipment, which included a 23" Apple Cinema display and a 50" Panasonic HD plasma screen. Though plasma produces a noisy picture, it was chosen over LCD for its much higher contrast ratio. (During production, Castañeda worked on an offline cut using a 1.25GHz G4 Powerbook, 500GB of FireWire-drive storage and a 13" Sony NTSC studio monitor.)

On set, with limited resources and manpower, Mathis gambled by shooting without an HD reference monitor, a waveform monitor or a digital technician. He judged exposure with only the Sony HDW-F900's black-and-white viewfinder. (Midway through, he switched to a HDVF-C30W color viewfinder, which had just been released.) Eagle-eyed camera assistant Brian Osmond judged focus by instinct and a small onboard LCD monitor. The method was a return to intimate filmmaking of old. "I was at the front of the line in thinking I was crazy," Mathis admits. "We just didn't have the bodies to move a monitor around in tight practical locations. We tried to comfort ourselves in our many moments of insecurity by telling ourselves that really good movies had been made like this before."

The filmmakers screened the HD dailies on a Panasonic 42" HD plasma display, with an on-the-fly dub to DVcam and conversion to 29.97 fps for offline editing. Amazingly, the monitorless principal photography came off without a hitch. When Mathis returned home to his new



Images courtesy of Clark Mathis.

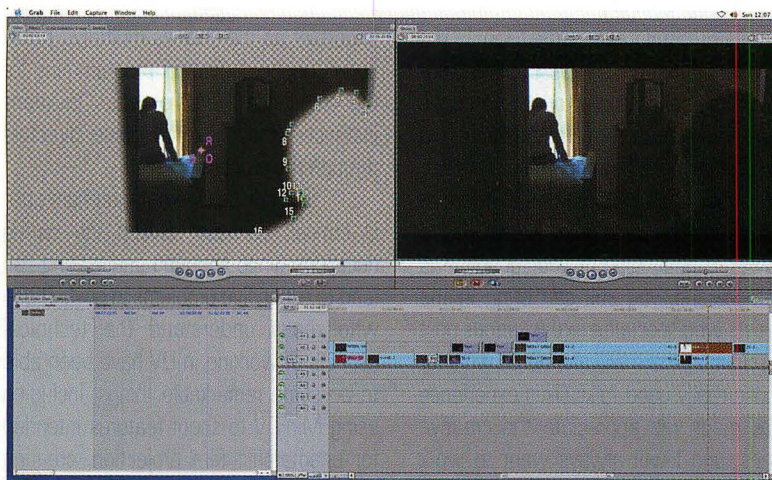
suite for postproduction, however, he found that he had used up much of his luck. He explains, "I would be on the phone with tech support and I would hear them leafing through the manual — the same one I had in front of me — and get different answers from different people. [The problem] was the inoperability of all the different components, as well as the processor speed."

In an effort to streamline the offline process, all DVCam footage was brought in through the Cinewave. However, it encoded the DVCam material with its own DV codec. "I think they've fixed it by now, but their version of DV was highly problematic," he recalls. "It would crash the system and freeze us up. Anybody who is doing DV should work in native FireWire." Cinewave forces the computer, rather than the input/output card itself, to compress and decompress the material in real time. In the case of dual-processor computers, this can fool the machine into thinking it is doing two operations in the same time cycle, and the computer shuts itself down.

"I did not attempt to do a DV or standard-def proxy correction," Mathis adds. "Once I finished the offline, I wanted to do everything at full hi-def resolution. That really put the system through its paces; it wasn't just color-correction, it was titling and a little bit of compositing. The render times were massive."

In addition, Mathis frequently bumped into the ceiling of his storage and 100MB/sec transport limits with the HD footage. "I could only load about 24 minutes of footage to work on at a time," he says. "I sort of violated the 'legal limit' of headroom on my RAID array for reliable playback."

But working in this environment did allow Mathis to manipulate the images with Power Windows. "As slow as it is," he says, "the toolset is so much more powerful than basic da Vinci." FCP's matte tool is limited to eight points of manipulation, so the cinematographer searched for a more flexible third-party plug-in. A wealth of plug-ins are available, many developed by private parties, and after some searching through Web



Mathis used matte plug-ins from CHV to create multi-point mattes to defocus foreground objects for a more film-like depth of field.

forums, the cinematographer stumbled upon the German company CHV's 20- and 40-point matte tools with Bezier handles. With these, he was able to custom-shape windows rather than rely on basic geometric shapes.

These came in handy particularly on a day-for-night shot involving Molly where she sat up in bed and was framed by a window — which revealed that it was daytime outside. "We didn't have enough ND gel, so I locked the camera down and planned even during the shooting phase to trace the windows in post and darken them," he explains. "As she sat up into the window area, I had to create a roto-scope matte that traced her. It required one of the 40-point mattes and took a long time to do."

Mathis also used the plug-in to matte foreground sections of scenes and then applied Gaussian blurs to defocus the areas and to create a shallower, more film-like depth of field that the HD format usually lacks. "The downside with the plug-ins is that they involve so much math that they take longer to render," he comments.

He chose to use CHV's secondary color correction plug-in as well, because FCP's color correction functioned as an either/or — he either could do an overall color-correction or could pick a color to isolate. CHV allowed him to do both. "I could do a global color correction on a scene and then go in and pick," he offers. "For instance, in a scene set in a gravel pit, I gave a cold bias to everything, but there was a red truck that I really wanted to pop. When I gave it a blue bias, the

truck turned purple. Once I did the global correction, I picked varying degrees of purple on the truck. But there were veins in the rock that were purple enough to match the truck, so I couldn't do just one correction; I had to have four or five that captured all the different shadings and then turned those back into more of a pure red."

Fourteen different versions of *Bereft* were created to satisfy various outlets and foreign markets. The project was shot in the 2.35:1 aspect ratio, and Mathis handled the 2.35 1080p 23.98 fps theatrical version, 2.25 and 16x9 1080i versions on his setup — which in 2003 cost about \$60,000. (Prices have since dropped.) Over 2TB of render files were created and final output to tape was accomplished at Digital Film Tree using its much larger fiber storage array to do single-output passes. Level 3 Post took on the 4x3 because pan and scan in FCP is done by key-frame animation and Mathis lacked the extensive time that was required. ("By then, I was on the ground in the fetal position," he jokes.) Todd/AO conformed the audio, and everything passed Showtime's quality-control check.

Bereft was an educational experience for Mathis, but one he would be willing to tackle again, at least for this type of smaller project. "It's raw ones and zeroes, malleable beyond belief," he says. "I think to attain authorship, we as cinematographers need to be very aware that part of our signature style and expression on set is going to be changeable. We should plant our flag firmly in this part of the post workflow so we can

retain control over [the look] we intended. I am not the best colorist, nor by far the best compositor or rotoscopist, but I feel a deep creative satisfaction in doing this myself on this scale. This is a precursor to an in-home digital intermediate, and the price point allows you to own the gear. Also, if your deadline is compressed, you still can bring in the artists who specialize in the various post disciplines; there will always be work for those really good folks. This experience has made me appreciate the creative ones, and I will always want to work with an artist in front of a da Vinci whenever possible."



Laura Smiles, a feature shot on DV by Sion Michel, ACS (opposite page), was transferred to film at EFilm.

The Evolving Process of Taking DV to Film by Stephanie Argy

In the seven years since the Danish picture *Festen* (*The Celebration*) became the first feature shot on MiniDV to get a wide theatrical release, working on video has become widely accepted in the world of independent film. About 70 percent of the 3,800 shorts submitted for the 2005 Sundance Film Festival originated on video, as did 43 of the 120 features and 30 of the 82 shorts that were ultimately screened. But while the stigma associated with shooting indie projects on video — and MiniDV in particular — may have largely disappeared, using MiniDV can still lead to some unfamiliar problems, particularly when it comes to postproduction steps such as editing and transferring to film.

When shooting projects on DV, cinematographers often find that they're expected to be technical experts on all aspects of working with the format. "Cinematographers become more

important as the choices multiply," notes John Cooper, director of programming for the Sundance Film Festival. "In many instances, they have to guide directors through the process."

The advice cinematographers offer is critical, because making the wrong decisions while shooting and editing can lead to expensive problems in post. Those who really understand the technical aspects of working in DV have been able to do some remarkable things, including using MiniDV to shoot features intended for anamorphic film projection, creating 3-D rigs with a pair of MiniDV cameras, and even bypassing DV cameras' built-in recording mechanisms to capture higher-resolution images.

According to EFilm co-founder David Hays, 24p video has become the most common DV format for independent filmmakers, surpassing NTSC and PAL. But even two years after the introduction of the Panasonic AG-DVX100, the first MiniDV camera to offer 24p progressive-scan video, there is still no standard workflow for 24p movies destined for transfer to film. For example, EFilm recommends that filmmakers shoot in 24p Advanced mode, which applies a 2:3:3:2 pulldown when it records the 24-fps signal to 29.97-fps tape. "It keeps the cadence straight throughout the editorial process, so there's less likelihood of having to go back in and recraft the edit," says Hays. But at DuArt in New York, chief engineer Maurice Schechter tells filmmakers not to use 24p Advanced. "There are only a few editing systems that can handle that mode, whereas almost every edit system can work with the 24p Standard mode," says Schechter. "If you want to make sure your tapes can be edited anywhere with the least amount of trouble, use the Standard cadence."

In a world filled with contradictory advice, filmmakers must take the time during preproduction to sort out their entire workflow; this includes discussing the project with an editor, a lab and any other post personnel who might be necessary. That seldom happens, however. Joe Monge, vice president of video operations at DuArt, estimates that about 10 DV features went through DuArt last year, but

with few exceptions, he didn't hear about them until the filmmakers were ready to transfer their works to film. "That's a little disconcerting," he says.

Still, most post facilities have worked on far more DV projects than any individual filmmaker ever could, which means they can offer advice about what will and won't work. DuArt's Monge, for example, warns filmmakers not to over-process the image during the editorial phase. "The bottom line is, you don't want to introduce artifacts," he explains. "It could be too sharp; too much intensity can introduce anomalies or ghosting, especially in the reds."

Hays offers similar advice for digital capture, suggesting that cinematographers stay conservative about how much image adjustment they do to MiniDV images. Filtration can appear doubled, he says, which means a 1/4 Tiffen Pro-Mist can look like a 1/2 application. When in doubt, keep the image as clean as possible. The same goes for camera settings: "With some of these cameras, you're able to dial in certain looks, but people may change their minds and then not be able to get out of that look later."

Schechter tells cinematographers there are two things they should do on set to make sure they capture the best footage they can. First, rather than an LCD or flat-panel monitor, use a CRT monitor, preferably in a black bag, to check exposure and focus. Second, especially with DV, use a waveform monitor to see if there is clipping in the image. "You can decide on set whether what you're seeing is what you intended," says Schechter. "It's just another tool to understand what's going down on tape. When you're shooting, you want to capture images that are as 'neutral' as possible."

Another significant warning labs issue to cinematographers using MiniDV is that the cameras don't lend themselves to very wide shots. "There's not enough information going onto the chip, so things start to break up," explains Monge. "If you're doing a DV feature, you shouldn't be doing wide shots."

Because many cinematographers have by now had chances to experiment with MiniDV and HD, they have begun to



move past the basics and push the formats. Franz Lustig and Sion Michel, ACS, for example, both recently shot DV features that were ultimately transferred to film at an aspect ratio of 2.40:1.

Lustig's project was *Land of Plenty*, directed by Wim Wenders. The story of a Vietnam War veteran trying to deal with the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the movie is gritty, emotional and well-suited to the flexibility and mobility of DV — in this case, the PAL version of the DVX100. But Wenders and Lustig decided early on that they wanted a widescreen frame. "It gives you a different editing rhythm, a different frame, and it's more natural for the eye to watch it," says Lustig. "The crazy thing was shooting it with the little Panasonic cameras."

After *Land of Plenty* was edited, Lustig did a seven-day da Vinci color-correction session at Arri Film and Television Services in Munich, Germany. He and colorist Peter Deinas found they had to stay with primary color-correction because delving into secondaries produced a strange pattern of color chunks. According to Deinas, this happened because the differences between the single colors were too big, and the compression algorithm was not precise enough to represent them, so several colors would be combined into one chunk.

Lustig then did a series of filmout tests at four labs: Arri Munich, Technicolor-New York, Efilm, and Das Werk in Berlin. "We sent them two minutes of footage with really difficult scenes," says Lustig. "The results all were very good, and they each had a different look." All of

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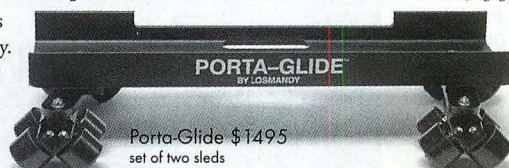
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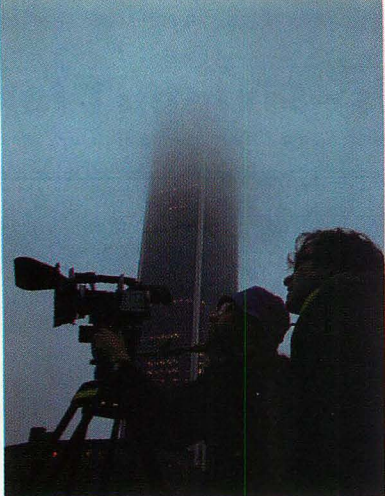
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Franz Lustig (on camera) shot *Land of Plenty* on a Panasonic PAL DVX100 for director Wim Wenders.



the labs used Arrilaser Film Recorders except for Das Werk, which used a CRT-based recorder. "Those results looked really nice, but the artifacts showed up more."

Ultimately, he and Wenders chose to use Arri Munich, partly because it was the only company that could print on an interpositive (IP), which they thought would be good for making prints for multiple countries. "Making an IP adds a little contrast, but not as much as you might think," notes the cinematographer.

Michel took a slightly different route to making a 2.40:1 print of *Laura Smiles*, directed by Jason Ruscio. The film is about a woman who survives a tragedy, only to find herself unraveling seven years later. Michel shot sequences set in the present day with a Panasonic SDX900 and Zeiss DigiPrimes, and he used a DVX100A to shoot the flashbacks. He also employed a Canon HJ21 7.5-158mm HD zoom to create a half-dozen transitional "creeps."

Again, making a widescreen 35mm print was a goal from the beginning. "We always knew this film was going to be [seen in] CinemaScope, which was an aesthetic choice," says Michel. He consulted with Hays at EFilm about the lab's proprietary system, which does a center extraction and randomly subsamples pixels. "I was sold on EFilm as soon as we saw tests," says the cinematographer, who recalls being impressed by the color rendition, the look of the blacks, and the relative lack of artifacting and degradation in the highlights.

After the picture was edited on Final Cut Pro, EFilm used an edit decision list (EDL) to recapture the footage from the original tapes, assembling a D-5 version of the project. This was then color-corrected

on a da Vinci 2K, which colorist Brian George set up in film mode. "We'd grade on the da Vinci, then go to Deluxe to check the print, and it was really close," says Michel. "There wasn't much second-guessing. Usually, when you're transferring video to film, density is a lot different. You can't just say it's a three-point difference, because tape seems a little hotter. You might say it's three points too dark, but it might be only one point too dark. But EFilm's technology seems to have factored that in."

Although the filmmakers on *Land of Plenty* and *Laura Smiles* planned on making film prints from the outset, many of their peers have begun to wonder whether that step is necessary in the film-festival world. According to Mike Plante, the short-film programmer and presentation manager at Sundance, the chief concern filmmakers have about projecting their work digitally is what critics, distributors and other audience members will think. "If you've shot well, the audiences might never know, but if they're watching your movie and thinking, 'Hmm, I wonder what this was made on,' that's a bigger issue," says Plante. "Critics are interested in whether the film works. In my experience, distributors have never asked, 'What is this screening on?' They're deciding whether they can sell it. So in all those ways, you're okay exhibiting on video."

Sundance now has digital projectors in 15 of its 22 venues. Chuck Collins, senior market development manager for Digital Projection, the company that provides Sundance with those projectors, says he believes almost every festival now has at least one video projector. He spends a lot of time fielding questions from filmmakers, especially those who will be screening at Sundance. "Every year around November, we get calls from filmmakers who want to know what projectors we're taking [to the festival], so that when they make their copies, they're viewing them on similar equipment," says Collins.

But for exhibition beyond the festival world, a digital copy of a movie may not be enough. "It's common knowledge that if you're doing a theatrical

release, you have to go to film," says Cooper. "You can't get a significant release today until you go to film."

Nancy Schreiber, ASC, who won the 2004 Sundance Film Festival Award for Best Cinematography for the DV feature *November* (see *AC* May '04), says she thinks most filmmakers aspire to have their work shown on film. "If you don't think your film is going to be seen out there in the world," she asks, "why are you making it?"

While some filmmakers use MiniDV cameras to make traditional narrative movies, others use them in more experimental ways. One example of that kind of work is the Andromeda system from Reel Stream, which extracts the raw video signal from a DVX100 or DVX100A (and soon the Canon XL2) and outputs it to a hard drive. According to Juan Pertierra, chief technical officer at Reel Stream, after images are captured by a camera's CCD or CMOS sensor, a substantial amount of information is discarded, even before compression is applied to make the images small enough to record to tape. Regardless of how precisely the color was originally digitized, it is reduced to 8 bits per channel, while the chroma is subsampled to 4:1:1. Dynamic range is decreased by almost one-half, to comply with NTSC/PAL video standards, and even the image's spatial resolution is reduced. But by tapping into the signal just after it's captured by the sensor and then converted from analog to digital, before any image degradation takes place, all of the original information is still available, yielding an image with much greater latitude, smoother colors and greater shadow detail.

Pertierra and Jeremy Jacobs, who met at Indiana's Purdue University as students, developed Andromeda after they graduated and are now offering to customize existing cameras. "The only thing different is a small, inconspicuous black box underneath, which houses our system, with a USB 2.0 port," says Jacobs. The modified camera outputs the raw image data in a proprietary format. After being captured, the image data can be converted to any QuickTime-

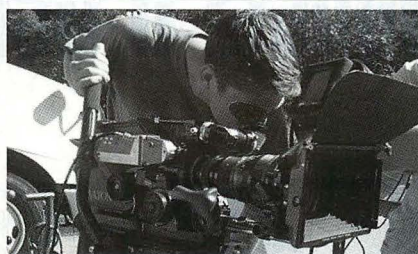
compatible format, including DV/NTSC, using Reel Stream's companion software, Sculptor HD. By taking advantage of the fact that the green CCD is offset by half a pixel from the red and blue CCDs, Jacobs and Pertierra have also devised a way to increase the CCDs' usable frame size from 773x495 pixels to 1546x990 pixels. "It looks like it came off an HD camera," says Pertierra.

One company that has been impressed enough to enter into a partnership with Reel Stream is 21st Century 3D in New York, which has developed a 3-D stereo camera built out of DVX100s. Company CEO and founder Jason Goodman says that the next generation of the camera will use an Andromedized DVX100. "It's taking so much more data than the native cameras give you that we're hopeful we'll have the lightest and smallest 3-D HD camera around," says Goodman. "I like the success we've had taking an existing DV product and 'hot-rodding' it. It's like that show *Pimp My Ride*. That's how I look at what Juan and Jeremy are doing: it's like *Pimp My Video Camera*."

DV's initial attraction for many filmmakers lay in its lower upfront production cost, but over the last seven years, it has matured into a format that offers aesthetic options and means for technical innovation. But to get the maximum benefit from using the format, cinematographers and their collaborators must understand the entire workflow, including how best to handle it all through post.

Fortunately, it's relatively simple to experiment with and acquire expertise on MiniDV because the format is so inexpensive. Schreiber notes that after she shot *November*, she was often asked for her advice about the camera she used, the Panasonic AG-DVX100. She advised the questioners to get the camera and do tests to get their own sense of how the technology could contribute to their projects. "I hope they'll go make their own mistakes and choices," she says. "DV is not film. In order to make a beautiful piece of art, you need to embrace the limitations and exploit the differences."

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New Products & Services

by Jay Holben



Gamma & Density's 3cP on-set color-correction system creates a report to send to the colorist. The report, a still JPEG image, includes the original camera still, corrected still and customizable information. Opposite: The T-Stop chart allows a user to click anywhere on an image to get a meter reading of the area.

The Right Look

As cinematographers, we all have encountered the pain and frustration of bad dailies. In the traditional photochemical world, this was often easily corrected via quick communication with the timer and tight control over printer lights. ("Give me two more points of red there") In the growing world of digital postproduction, that precise communication has disappeared; instead, we find ourselves writing notes to the colorist: "Make it warm like sunset, but a winter sunset in Montana, and then add a little blue in the shadows, but not too much" Obviously, the interpretation of such notations is rather open-ended. For some time, we have needed a tool to better communicate our wishes to the colorists who are trying to give us what we need.

Several years ago, I learned about a new concept in dailies control developed by cinematographer Yuri Neyman (*Liquid Sky*, *D.O.A.*). Neyman, an entrepreneurial spirit with a penchant for acronyms, had decided to do something about the lack of precise communication with telecine colorists. Under his own banner, Gamma & Density, he developed TCS (Thorough Control System), which consisted of a custom-designed color chart (the CCC, or Cinematographer's Control Chart) and a series of film loops, allowing the telecine colorist to zero-out the color bay and then correct to the CCC shot on set. The

chart was calibrated in telecine language — the gray chips designated precisely where IRE levels should fall — and provided standard real-world color reference chips labeled Sky, Greenery and Skin Tone.

The CCC quickly became a favorite color chart for many cinematographers, but Neyman wasn't satisfied with just the chart alone. He also developed the CCCP (3cP), the Cinematographer's Color Correction

Program, a combination of a digital still camera and computer station that could be used to color-correct images to the cinematographer's specifications. The resulting file was then sent to the lab, where a duplicate system was set up with a custom-calibrated monitor to view the image taken on the set. Although the system was cumbersome and a great deal of R&D and investment were required to calibrate each lab, it was an extraordinary concept that really worked.

After several years of further research, Neyman has reappeared on the scene with a greatly improved version of the same system, now in a compact and highly simplified form.

The concept is simple, and one that mirrors some techniques already in use by many cinematographers with varying degrees of success. Utilizing a Nikon D70 6-megapixel (3008x2000) SLR digital still camera (the model that Gamma & Density recommends, although 3cP can create a calibrated profile for any camera a cinematographer uses), the cinematographer takes a digital still of a setup on set during the normal shooting day. The Nikon is then connected to a Macintosh G4 PowerBook system on set with G&D's 3cP software and calibrated cinema display monitor. The software ingests the D70's images and allows the cinematographer to bring them up one by

one and color-correct them. The image is then saved, and the program outputs a 3cP Report form that is sent to the post facility. The colorist brings that report up on his or her own viewing monitor — the same monitor that will be used to color-correct the day's footage — and can compare the images via split-screen to achieve the look the cinematographer is seeking.

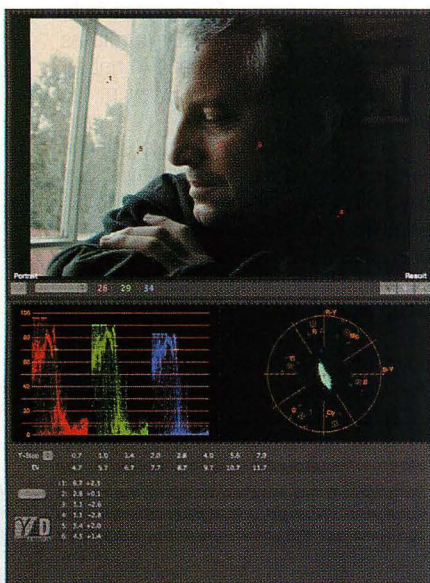
Sound easy enough? It is. Sound incredibly simple and potentially flawed? It is anything but.

Gamma & Density starts by working specifically with each postproduction facility, thoroughly examining its workflow and engineering structure. Using the facility's CCC, G&D develops a custom LUT profile for the specific facility and even for each color bay to ensure that the G4 monitor on set will represent almost exactly (within the limitations of LCD technology, of course) what the colorist will see on his professional monitor.

This homework is done away from the cinematographer, whose involvement is not necessary. You don't have to be a technological expert or a color scientist to utilize the 3cP system; G&D takes care of the hard work for you.

Back on set, once a still is shot of a given setup, that image is loaded into the PowerBook and imported into the 3cP software. Each image is then labeled with metadata to represent the shooting day: scene, take, and any notes to the colorist. When the image is in the system, the cinematographer views an interface that shows two versions of the image: the original image taken by the D70, and the image as it is being color-corrected.

The first steps for image manipulation are to set parameters for how the image will eventually end up. Several pull-down menus access custom LUT profiles, and the cinematographer chooses the profile for the digital camera he is using (if different from the recommended D70), the lens on the still camera, and the film stock he is shooting on set. (3cP is already updated with profiles for all the stocks in the new Kodak Vision2 line, as well as for the new Fuji Eterna 500.) The cinematographer also chooses any filtration being used on the main camera, any special processing that the



film will go through (push, pull, bleach-bypass, etc.), what print stock will eventually be used, what video standard the colorist is using in the bay, and so forth — including customizable parameters for any given situation (cross-processing, high-contrast stocks, etc.) Once these parameters are set, the cinematographer then has a representation of what the digital camera image looks like under these LUT profiles — in essence, what the final image will look like after it is recorded back to film.

From there, one has several options for manipulating the image, starting with the classic printer points. An extremely simple interface allows the user to adjust standard sliders or click buttons to apply one point of red, green, blue or one point of yellow, cyan, magenta to the image. Going a step further and taking the image beyond what is possible in photochemical color-correction, the interface also includes adjustments for density, hue and saturation. For the brave or more digitally savvy, 3cP offers a second interface for manipulating individual red, green and blue characteristic curves. For the expert user, 3cP offers sliders for pedestal, gamma and gain adjustments of R, G, B and Y.

3cP doesn't just show adjustments, it offers the user a look at several options of analysis tools, including waveforms, vectorscopes, histograms and luma-curve displays. An additional nifty feature, especially for cinematographers shooting digitally, is the T-Stop Chart. Once a still is brought into the system, the cinematographer sets the T-Stop Chart to the shooting stop, and a scale is then shown for three stops over and four stops under that shooting stop.

Director's Viewfinder OIC-16



The Highlights

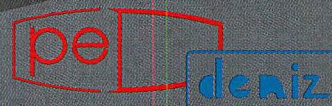
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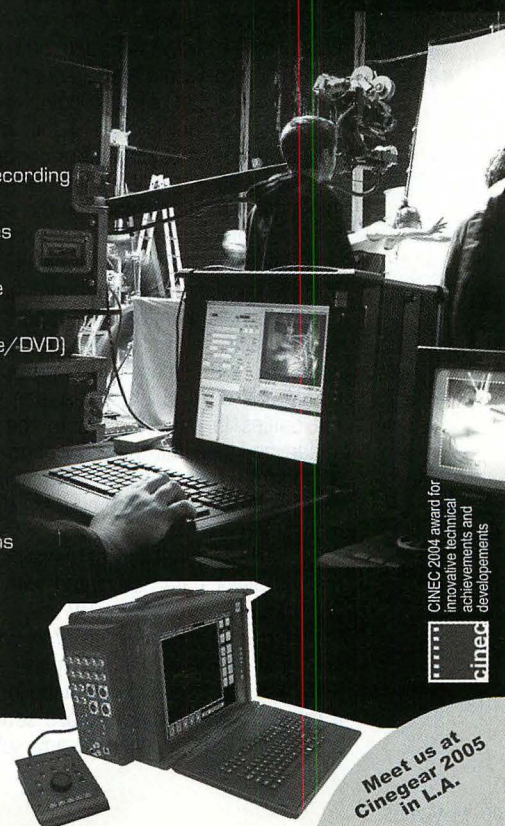
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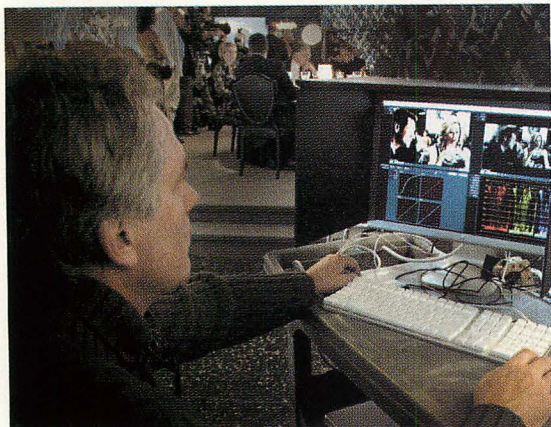
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Above: Jerzy Zelinski, ASC uses 3cP on the set of the *Fun With Dick and Jane* remake.

The user can then move the cursor onto the image to get a meter reading for that area of the frame. Think that window might be a bit too hot? Think you might be losing detail in those shadows? Click on them and see what stop they're reading at.

Once the cinematographer is pleased with the final look of his corrected image, he generates a 3cP Report, which is a still image in JPEG format that includes the original camera still, corrected still and customizable information for the colorist, including waveform and vectorscope readings on the corrected image; linear and/or log characteristic curves and metadata that represent the color-timing numbers (if that option was used); hue swing and saturation settings; pedestal, gamma and gain settings for Y, R, G and B; and notes about the stock, process and print stocks. G&D also incorporates a quality-check "bug" superimposed on the corrected image, which shows RGB gamma boxes, seven-step grayscale and Greenery, Skin Tone and Sky color patches. With the bug, a colorist can quickly see if the image was somehow manipulated or corrupted and make sure it still accurately represents the corrections made on the set by the cinematographer. This report is sent via CD or FTP to the colorist, who, utilizing his own correction system, brings up the graphic on his monitor. Each report also comes with a full-screen corrected image, so the colorist can bring up the image and do a quick split-screen with the dailies to correct them to the 3cP image, and then utilize the waveform and vectorscope reports as a quick check to make sure he's made the correct adjustments.

An additional perk of the system is that the color data associated with any given image corrected in 3cP stays with the image and is recalled instantly whenever that image is opened in the software. If a user needs to match the look of a previous day's footage, those settings are recalled and applied to any subse-

quent image. This eliminates the "starting from scratch" aspect of working with the system each day and allows the cinematographer to make adjustments to previous images or settings along the way.

Thus far, only a few cinematographers have had the opportunity to road-test the new incarnation of the 3cP system. Among them are Checco Varese (on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*), Guillermo Navarro, ASC (on *Zathura*), John Rosenlund (on *Factotum*) and Jerzy Zielinski, ASC (on *Fun With Dick and Jane*). Recently, Zielinski took a break from postproduction on *Dick and Jane* to present a demonstration of the 3cP system at Modern VideoFilm, Inc. in Glendale, California, where he was working on the digital intermediate (DI) for the film. When Zielinski signed on to shoot the picture for director Dean Parisot, he was informed by Sony/Columbia Pictures that digital dailies were the only option for the production. "We were told, 'Take it or leave it,' so I took it," offers Zielinski with a smile. The cinematographer decided to utilize the 3cP system for the 112-day shoot to provide more precise communication with the telecine colorist throughout the process.

Additionally, all of the 3cP reports and metadata have followed the picture into the DI, where colorist Skip Kimball uses them as a jumping-off point to finalize the picture for laser recording. "The 3cP system allowed me to close the loop and better communicate with the colorist to get the look I wanted," says Zielinski. "Although a digital camera is not the ideal representation of what is on the film frame, it was close enough, in my opinion, to be acceptable and to achieve much better dailies that were exactly what I wanted to see."

He continues, "When I learned that we were going with digital dailies and that I would never see film dailies, I realized I had lost a great deal of control over the image. I needed a system of communication — a visual reference — for the colorist that could be carried all the way to the final stages of the DI process. The 3cP system was a very special find, because it allowed me to maintain control over the image, even through the infinite possibilities of digital color-correction."

According to Neyman, the goal of Gamma & Density is to "improve the role of cinematographer in the modern post-production process. This is one of the most important issues facing cinematographers today, because as technology has become more complex, the connection with the cinematographer in post has

become more fragile. Our purpose is to maintain the cinematographer's role as the author of the images and to not let any technology get in the way of his authorship.

"We are offering peace of mind — a combination of insurance and psychotherapy," Neyman concludes with a laugh. "We ensure that you have the best possible dailies on the set, totally accurate to your vision, so that you can sleep well at night."

For more information and to download a demo of the 3cP software, visit www.gammaanddensity.com or call (323) 960-7475.



Through Warm-Colored Glass

Schneider Optics has added three new choices to its line of excellent glass camera filters for motion-picture use: two warm-color variations to complement its existing Coral filters, and an intriguing new concept in neutral density.

It is difficult to be objective about color-effects filters, as any perception of their effects boils down to personal aesthetics. In my work, I always have a bias toward a warmer color palette — yellows, reds and oranges — and I was interested to see Schneider's two new color filters: Maui Brown and Sahara Gold.

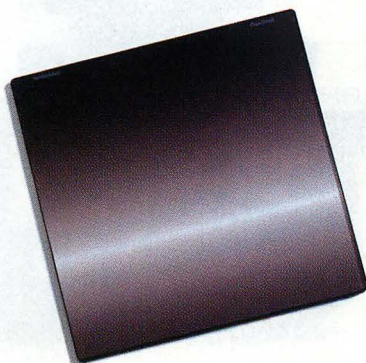
Previously, Schneider's palette of professional motion-picture filters was limited to color-correction, diffusion, ND grads and a selection of Coral strengths. To complement that collection, it has added three strengths of Maui Brown, a



kind of pale chocolate-colored filter, and Sahara Gold, which is very similar to an 81EF.

I took both out to Santa Monica with my producer, Renee Intlekofer, to audition the new filters in some fairly harsh daylight. Overall, I was very pleased with the Maui Brown's effect, which lent harsh noon daylight an invitingly warm cast that wasn't too deep or dirty. I felt the Maui #3 had the most appeal; even though it was the strongest of the three filters, the other two seemed a little too close to the typical Los Angeles "smog" look. The stop compensations were acceptable as well, ranging from 1 1/3 stop for the #1 to a 2 2/3 stop for the #3.

The Sahara Gold is a nice, subtle warming filter that didn't corrupt the blue sky too much and added a nice *Baywatch*-like tone to Renee's skin. Out of curiosity, I tried the Sahara as a color-correction filter, shooting daylight under tungsten balance, and it worked remarkably well. Taking some color measurements, I found that the Sahara had a mired shift of about +79, somewhere between a 1/4 and 1/2 CTO, or between an 81EF and an 85C (effectively correcting 5500°K to about 3600°K, give or take 200°K) with a very slight bias to green. Like an 85, the stop compensation for the Sahara is 2/3 of a stop. It makes me wonder why I would add such a filter to my kit, especially in this era of digital postproduction; I could very easily use an 81EF or 85C, which I would already have with me. However, the Maui Brown filter was definitely one I would reach for again, because it provides a different result than the Chocolate filters I've used before.



For its neutral-density line, Schneider has introduced a new concept with the Dual Grad, a combination ND.3 overall and graduated top half from .3 to .9. When I first heard of the Dual Grad, I envisioned a double gradation, maybe a .3 to clear from the bottom to the middle and a clear to .9 from the middle to the

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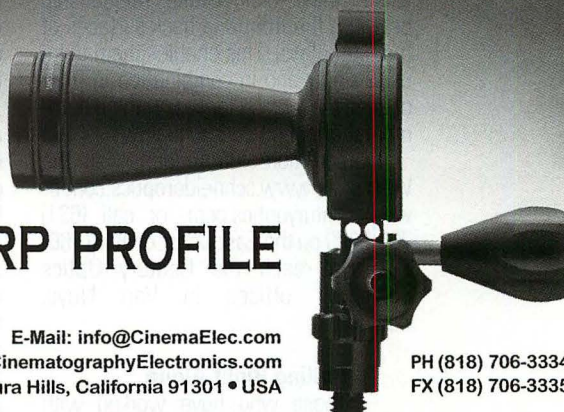
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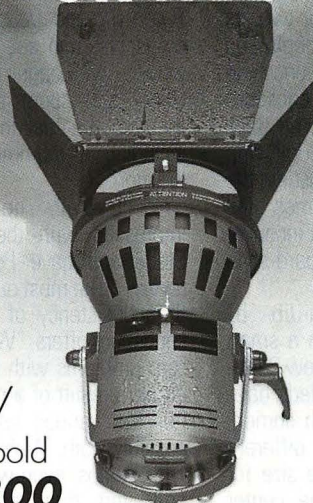
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top; I therefore was a bit disappointed when I saw that it was a .3 overall with a grad from .3 to .9 at the top half. Although this concept does eliminate the need for two filters, its application seems fairly limited. I'm sure cinematographers shooting a lot of exteriors will find this very exciting, however.

I worked with these filters in 6.6"x6.6" size, but Schneider offers them in all standard sizes: series 9, 4 1/2", 138mm, 4"x4" and 4"x4.560" (Panavision size).

Like all Schneider motion-picture filters, the new series is manufactured from optical glass, which is ground and polished to achieve precise plane-parallelism (the critical parallel relationship between the front and back surfaces of the filter glass). This enables them to be used singly and in combination in front of even the longest lenses, with no detrimental effect on image quality.

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Rolling Right Along

Those who have worked with skateboard-style wheels on dolly track — with full-sized Fisher or Chapman dollies — know that the wheels can be both a blessing and a curse. The most significant problem with these rigs is that in order to create the smoothest ride possible, the wheels needed to be of a relatively soft composite plastic/urethane to smooth out imperfections in the track. However, this soft material creates a problem: once the dolly is parked for a moment or two, its weight bears down on the wheels and creates a temporary flat spot; once the dolly starts rolling again, this causes a bump when the flat spot hits the track again. To solve this dilemma, a dolly grip must "rock out" the bump by pushing the dolly back and forth several times until the flat spot is rolled out. This inconvenience has afflicted all skateboard-style wheels — until now.

The folks at Porta-Jib by Losmandy have come up with a smart solution to flat spots with the new Porta-Glide Dolly Sleds. Since the sleds have 16 wheels in all (four at each corner), Porta-Jib decided to use 16 different wheel diameters — a unique size for each wheel. By adjusting the center positions for unique diameter on the wheel block, all wheels touch the track simultaneously; like those in other



systems, these wheels will flatten slightly when the dolly is parked. However, because each wheel has a different diameter, as soon as the dolly is moved, instead of 16 flat spots hitting the track in unison, each of the Porta-Glide wheels returns to its flat spot at a different time, making the flat spots undetectable.

This seemed like a smart approach, and I decided to give the Porta-Glide a trial run by asking dolly grip Dwayne Barr to give it a shot. Barr had worked as dolly grip for *AC* technical editor Christopher Probst on the aggressively handheld TV series *Boomtown* (for which Probst served as camera operator), and since then, he has moved on to serve as B-camera dolly grip for cinematographer Jamie Barber on *The O.C.* Although Barr doesn't have much call for large moves while working on the B-cam, he passed the sleds along to A-camera dolly grip Michael Landsburg so he could give them a whirl.

Landsburg has been in the business for 17 years, pushing dolly for the past eight years on television series such as *Felicity* and *Without a Trace* and on feature films that include *Behind Enemy Lines* and the last two features shot by the late John Alonzo, ASC, *The Prime Gig* and *Deuces Wild*. Landsburg owns his own set of skateboard-style wheels, was eager to try out the Porta-Glide, and spent two weeks putting them to the test in various situations, including a mammoth 300' move on location.

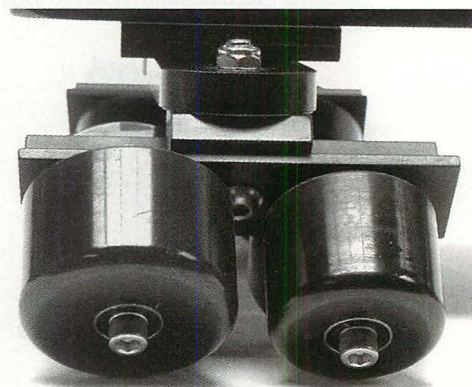
Overall, he was extremely impressed with the Porta-Glide Dolly Sleds and gave Porta-Jib a glowing review. "The most outstanding feature is the consistency of the skate wheel," Landsburg offers. "We've had absolutely zero problems with flat spots, which is either a result of a really good composite, the various wheel diameters, or possibly both. We've had no problems with bumps, even with the dolly sitting still and then rolling immediately. Overall, the construction is good and they're not too heavy.

"I've also noticed that they are

extremely quiet," he continues. "My own track wheels tend to make a kind of whirring sound, but the Porta-Glides are very quiet. This could be due to the fact that they're brand-new and the bearings are in better shape, but I've noticed a pretty big difference, especially in confined areas where sound really matters. They seem to have no resistance on the track and they glide effortlessly, easily taking out all the imperfections in the track. We're not seeing any gaps, burs or nicks in the track through the lens at all."

Each of the 16 wheels is identified with a number so that if replacement of any wheel becomes an issue, that specific diameter can be obtained to keep the sled in balance.

Another unique aspect of the Porta-Glide is the design of the rig's wheel blocks: three pivoting and one stationary. The pivoting arms let the dolly float effortlessly on all traditional curved tracks. Unlike other sleds, the arm articulation means that the dolly being supported remains centered during the curve. To Landsburg, this is an interesting feature, but one that has not



quite been perfected: "The pivoting arms became very tedious when we were trying to get the sled up on the track, because you suddenly have three moving parts that you're trying to align all at once. There's a hole in the wheel block and sled base so that you can lock the pivoting arms in place with a bolt of some kind, but it would be great to have

some sort of quick-release pin that would lock or unlock the arms. Ninety percent of the time when I'm using these kinds of wheels, I'm not using curved track, so I gain no benefit from the free arms; they're more of a liability when I'm putting the sled onto the track. It's an interesting feature for that 10 percent of the time when we pull out curved track, but the arms should be able to work more functionally when you're on straight track. Also, because the arms do pivot, they can almost be folded in on themselves for traveling. If one arm were shorter than the other, they would neatly fold in and be a lot easier to transport.

"Those are really picky comments, however," Landsburg concludes. "I would give these wheels a triple-A rating, for sure." (In fact, Landsburg was so pleased with the Porta-Glide wheels that AChad difficulty getting the loaner unit back from him to return to Porta-Jib!)

A set of two sleds lists for \$1,495. For more information on the Porta-Glide Dolly Sled, visit www.porta-jib.com or call (323) 462-2855.

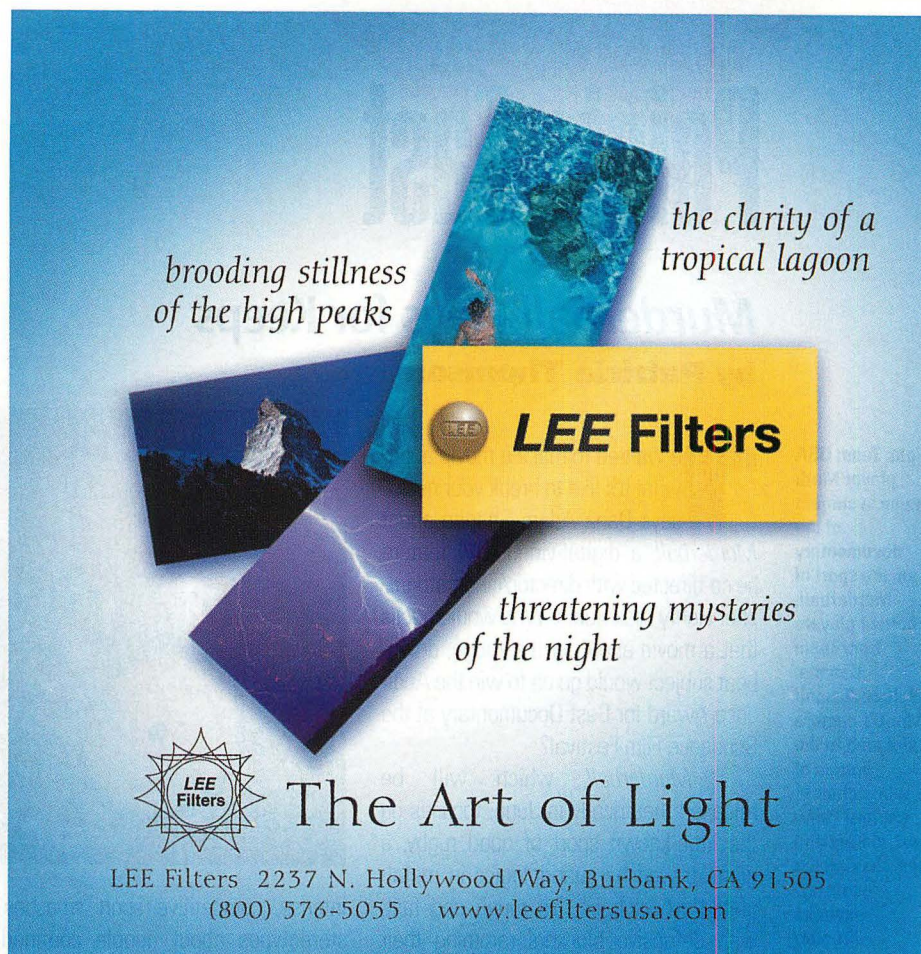
Shooter Scooter Addendum

In March, *AC* included a review of the Shooter Scooter dolly system from VFGadgets in New Products. In that review, I commented that the Shooter Scooter track system was decidedly lacking in a structure support, namely a "ladder" kind of cross-brace system — which, on most surfaces, made the track rather unwieldy to deal with, as it merely rolled away while I was trying to put the Scooter on the track.

Shooter Scooter inventor Peter Warren, CSC contacted me after the review to apologize for not sending me the track risers. As Warren explains, "Each kit comes with six risers to be placed every two feet when working on uneven surfaces. The wooden risers are notched on one side and have a groove running the length of the other so that you can use them perpendicular to the track or down the length. Indoors they can be used on top of the track, at the beginning and end, as spacers."

This addition to the Shooter Scooter dolly kit definitely makes a difference when using the track wheels.

For more information on the Shooter Scooter, see the March '05 New Products column or visit www.vfgadgets.com/ShooterScooter.html. ■



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Murderball Plays for Keeps

by Patricia Thomson

Right: Team USA player Mark Zupan, a subject of the documentary on the sport of Murderball, battles players from Team Canada.

Below: A small MiniDV camera is mounted to the bottom of wheelchair to capture "how fast, violent and gut-shaking the game is," explains director/cinematographer Henry Alex Rubin.

"We wanted to make a movie about what it's like to break your neck," says Dana Adam Shapiro about *Murderball*, a digital-video (DV) feature he co-directed with director/cinematographer Henry Alex Rubin. Who would guess that a movie about such a tough, down-beat subject would go on to win the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival?

Murderball, which will be released theatrically in June, focuses on the little-known sport of quad rugby, a game played by quadriplegics in metal-plated wheelchairs. It's rough and fast, with defensive blockers ramming their Mad Max chairs into opponents, while those with some hand function carry the ball. The sport is played by young men who have lost their limbs or use of their limbs through car crashes, bacterial infections, gunshots or freak accidents. The



intense, competitive sport smashes all stereotypes about people confined to wheelchairs.

Still, it was the players' backstories that convinced Shapiro, who was an editor at *Spin* magazine at the time, and co-producer Jeff Mandel that the sport could be the subject of a feature-length documentary. After Shapiro spent time interviewing Mark Zupan, a macho athlete who became Team USA's spokesman, he and Rubin traveled to Sweden for the 2002 world championship to investigate further. There, they met up with Zupan and were introduced to Joe Soares, a murderball all-star who had defected to Canada after being cut from Team USA, and who subsequently became Team Canada's volatile head coach. Zupan and Soares became the focus of the film.

Murderball follows the rivalry between the teams as they head to the 2004 Paralympics in Athens, Greece. It also delves into emotionally rich subplots, including the coach's relationship with his non-athletic son, and Zupan's reconciliation with his best friend, whose drunk driving had caused his injury 10 years earlier. Woven into these narrative threads is the story of Keith Cavill, who

had recently been paralyzed by a motocross accident, to illustrate what life is like for quadriplegics during their early phases of recovery.

When the filmmakers first met Zupan, the tattooed tough guy spoke about his "ass-level view of the world." Rubin quickly adopted that as the film's visual perspective. In a shot that tracks through the crowd at Zupan's high-school reunion, "all of these people are saying hello and hugging, and all of the angles are looking up at them," says Rubin, who sat in a wheelchair to capture the low-level perspectives. "It dawned on us how different it is to be in a crowd of people, talking and having drinks, when you're at their ass level. You're occupying a different physical space."

For a documentary, *Murderball* has a fair number of dolly shots, thanks to the players' spare wheelchairs, which the filmmakers were constantly borrowing. "We went out of our way to use portable lights — baby Chimeras, Mini Moles, China balls, and even a flashlight 'diffused' with a table napkin," notes Rubin. During the first shoot in Sweden, the filmmakers used Rubin's own 1-chip PC7 and 3-chip TVR 900 and PD-150



Photos courtesy of ThinkFilm.

Mini-DV cameras, but after that, they switched to Panasonic AG-DVX100s and shot in 24p Advanced mode. Tony Tamberelli of Tamberelli Video in New York City loaned them equipment for a year and a half — for free. "He just loved the project," Shapiro explains. Rubin adds, "He has a big, big heart."

From the beginning, Shapiro's goal was a 35mm blowup for theatrical distribution. "Näively, I thought, 'Of course this will go into theaters. Why not?' No one believed us, and that's part of why we got such good access!" With theatrical distribution in mind, Rubin used Panasonic's AG-LA7200 16:9 anamorphic lens adapter. "We decided to use it because of the improved image quality, but it was limiting for *vérité* material," he notes. "In those real-life scenes, you want to be able to zoom in as close as possible to people's eyes, to what they're looking at. You cannot do that with an anamorphic lens [adapter]. I was getting very frustrated."

Nervous about shooting key tournaments in Vancouver and Athens, he changed course midway through the shoot. He tested several alternatives — the camera's normal 4.5-45mm lens, a 36-72mm telephoto, and two fisheyes — and sent the footage to Film Effects and Deluxe Canada to see what a 35mm transfer would look like. "I really wanted to know if it was okay to take the anamorphic off and put a telephoto on," he explains. "I wanted it to have the same degree of crispness onscreen, and it did." Rubin subsequently relied more heavily on the telephoto, which he often used from a rolling wheelchair.

All of the games involved two to three cameras, and Shapiro and David Rodriguez operated the additional units. "Every game has its own aesthetic approach," Rubin points out. In Sweden, the filmmakers were only permitted to get as close to the action as the court's outer boundary, so Rubin attached a MiniDV camera to a long monopod and dipped it into the field of play while running up and down the court's edge. Another MiniDV camera was affixed to a player's wheelchair with a Bogen-Manfrotto Magic Arm, enabling the film-

makers to capture some intense, wheel-level POV shots. "That's an attempt to translate onto film how fast, violent and gut-shaking the game is," explains Rubin. "When you get hit, your entire insides shake, your bones and every organ. That's almost impossible to put on film." Contact mikes on the wheelchairs help convey the impact, and the broken focus mechanism on Rubin's camera provides offscreen evidence of the sport's intensity.

At the Vancouver tournament, Rubin often used the telephoto lens to shoot Soares across the court with players speeding by in the foreground. The Panasonic's shutter was cranked up to 1/20 for a sharpening effect. Another camera was at court level, and a third was positioned high in the stands. "The truth is, the game looks extraordinary from a low level, but you can't make any sense of it [from that perspective]," says Rubin. "It's just a bunch of wheelchairs colliding."

When the production reached the Athens game, that bird's-eye view became the dominant one, chiefly because the filmmakers were prohibited from crossing the grandstand railing. Later, however, they realized that this restriction had worked to their advantage. "The sport went from being very kinetic and violent, almost like a smash-up derby, to being almost like a ballet," says Shapiro. "The Athens game is epic. It's filmed from up high and in slow motion, which gives the game a coherence that was lacking in the first two games. From up high, you can actually see the strategy and the plays."

Despite the vivid game footage, the filmmakers are proudest of *Murderball's* more intimate moments. One such moment came after Team USA's defeat in Athens. The filmmakers kept shooting after the team came off the court, and with his telephoto, Rubin peered between the huddle of relatives encircling Zupan just as the weeping player and his girlfriend touched foreheads. "It was a very powerful moment," says the cinematographer. "The truth is, it's very hard to be there to capture true human emotions. It's the most fleeting thing. Had they won, we would never have had that." ■

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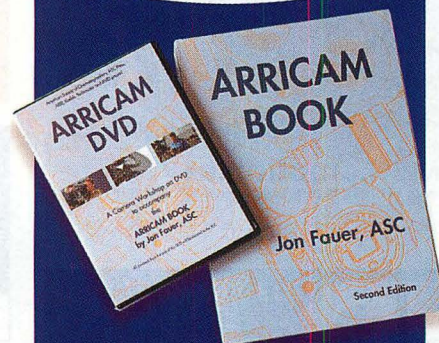
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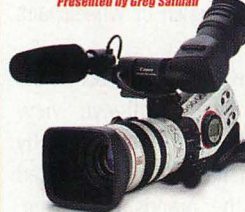


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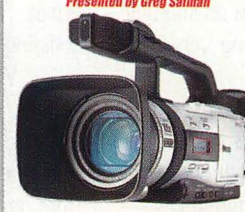
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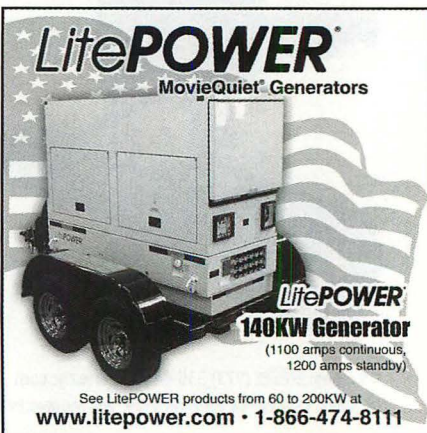
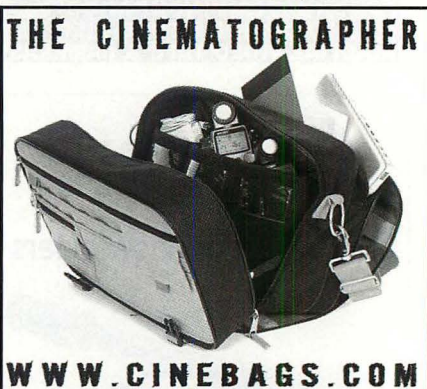
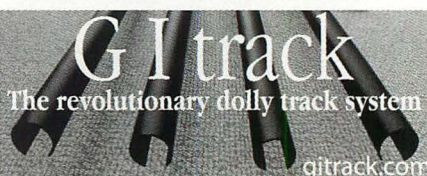
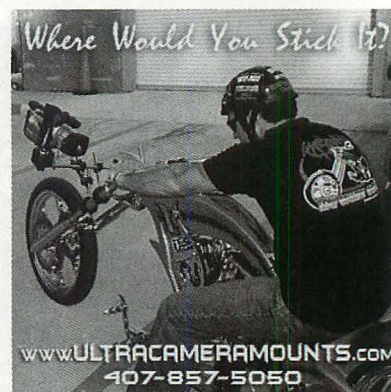
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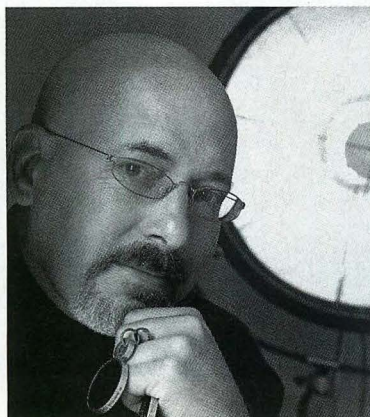
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From the Clubhouse



New ASC Member

Shortly after being handed a Master's degree in communications (specializing in film) from the University of Texas - Austin in 1973, **Daniel Pearl, ASC** was recruited by Austin-based documentarian Tobe Hooper to serve as director of photography on *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. The seminal horror film reinvented the genre and helped open the realm of independent film to mainstream audiences. He followed up with *The Fifth Floor* and *She Came to the Valley*.

The 1980s saw the rise of the music video, and Pearl began experimenting in the genre, initially to fill time between film projects. It turned into a lucrative career for him; reading through his exhaustive list of credits is like tracing the history of the music video as an art form. He shot the video for Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," The Police's "Every Breath You Take," Duran Duran's "The Reflex," U2's "With or Without You," Genesis' "I Can't Dance" and Guns N' Roses' "November Rain," earning numerous awards and nominations. He also shot videos for Paul Simon, Mariah Carey, Will Smith (including "Miami"), Coolio ("Fantastic Voyage"), Van Halen ("Hot For Teacher"), Ray Parker Jr. ("Ghostbusters"), Frankie Goes to Hollywood ("Relax"), Shania Twain, Moby, Trisha Yearwood, Garth Brooks and many others.

His commercial work also has been honored with award nominations, and his Motorola "Wings" spot has been added to the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Over the years, Pearl has found the time for other projects, including *Invaders From Mars* (1986), *A Return to Salem's Lot* (1987), *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1987), *Madonna: Truth or Dare* (1991) and the television pilot for *Frankenstein* (2004). Like Dante Spinotti, ASC, AIC did for *Manhunter*, Pearl enjoyed the rare opportunity to shoot a 2003 remake of his previous work: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. With "chainsaw" now one word, Marcus Nispel handled the directing duties and Tobe Hooper co-produced.

New Associate Member

Joshua Pines, the vice president of imaging research and development at Technicolor Digital Intermediates (TDI), earned a degree in electrical engineering from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art before joining MAGI in 1982 during the *Tron* days. He led the computer graphics division at R/Greenburg Associates and then supervised film effects and film recording at Degraf/Wahrman. He spent more than 10 years at Industrial Light and Magic,

supervising the film scanning and recording department from its start, beginning with *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, before moving on to Technicolor. Pines serves as the vice chairman of the ASC Technology Committee's Digital Intermediate Subcommittee.

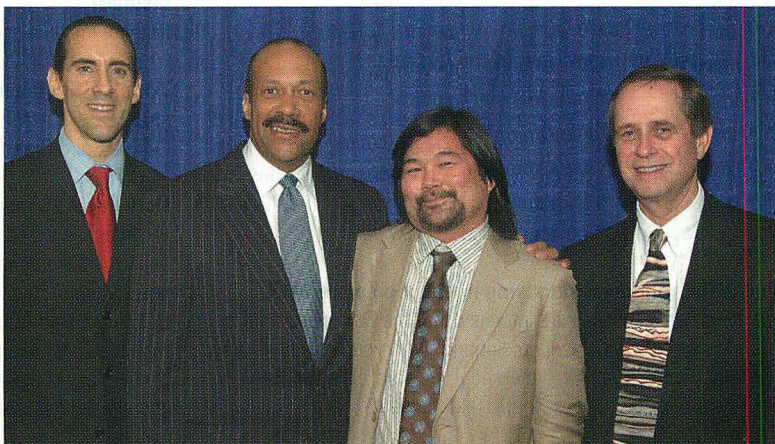
Mr. Okada Goes to Washington

ASC Vice President **Daryn Okada** recently addressed members of the U.S. Congress about the role cinematographers play in the nation's culture and economy. The February luncheon was designed to engage officials on Capitol Hill in discussions about the motion-picture industry.

"Government support of the art of filmmaking in this country is an important issue," says Okada. "Our films are one of our country's major exports. We work behind the scenes to author the images that tell the stories of our times. My goal was to inform the members of the group on the day-to-day issues facing filmmakers."

In addition to his duties as the ASC's second vice president, Okada chairs a focus group of ASC members and associate members in ancillary sectors of the industry that is researching the possibilities for the future of the art form.

ASC vice president **Daryn Okada** (third from left) talked cinematography with members of the U.S. Congress on a recent trip to Capitol Hill. Joining him were several executives from the Eastman Kodak Company (from left): **Stephen Ciccone**, director and vice president of public affairs; **Bill Tompkins**, vice president and general manager of motion-picture distribution products; and **John Johnston**, sales and marketing manager for entertainment imaging U.S. East.



ASC CLOSE-UP

Russ Alsobrook, ASC

When you were a child, what film made the strongest impression on you?

The African Queen. I was only 6 when I traveled down the river with Bogart and Hepburn, but those characters, molded by John Huston and bathed in Technicolor by Jack Cardiff, BSC, were etched in my memory forever.

Which cinematographers, past or present, do you most admire?

I'm astounded by the careers that ASC members William Daniels and Charles B. Lang carved out of an art form that was still in its infancy when they first stepped behind the camera. From the silent era to the mod and crazy Seventies, they were always at the forefront of cinematography. And Robert Surtees, ASC could shoot any genre, from Hollywood noir (*The Bad and the Beautiful*) to widescreen epics (*Ben Hur*). His work was as daring at the end of his career as it was at the beginning. Watch *The Graduate* and you'll see the definition of avant-garde cinematography.

What sparked your interest in photography?

While I was in high school and college, I watched classic movies and European art films at the Sign of the Sun bookstore in San Diego. An old 16mm projector running scratchy prints from the Janus Collection, along with endless doses of coffee and cigarettes, sent me on this amazing journey.

Where did you study and/or train?

I was an English literature major in college. The craft of storytelling was my first lesson. In the world of film, every day offers a new lesson. You never stop learning.

Who were your early teachers or mentors?

Frank Zuniga, Milas Hinshaw, Michael D. Lonzo, Ron Dexter, Gene McCabe and Kees Van Oostrum, ASC. I've wanted to publicly thank these generous and patient mentors for many years.

What are some of your key artistic influences?

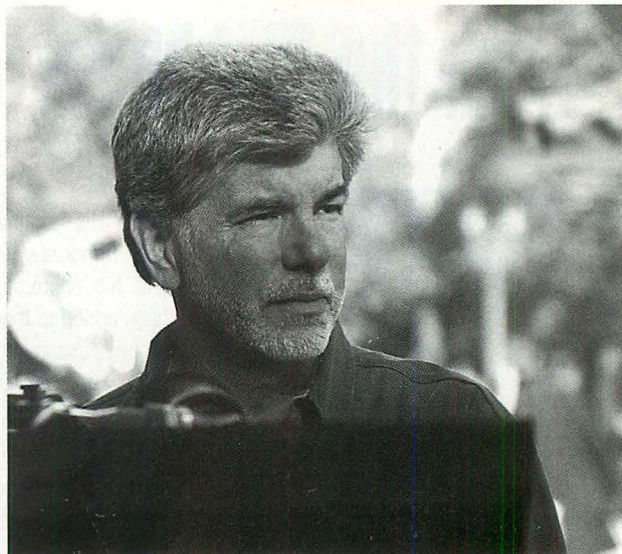
William Faulkner, Ezra Pound, Raymond Chandler and James Salter, all master wordsmiths. J.M.W. Turner, Edward Hopper and Emil Kosa Jr., all masters of light.

How did you get your first break in the business?

One fateful day while I was still in college, I was checking the surf on a beach in Santa Barbara. I observed a small film crew shooting tests for an upcoming TV movie. Somehow I gathered enough courage to approach the director and convince him of my desire to work in the movies. Two weeks later, he hired me as a gofer on the Disney show *Three Without Fear*. The next day, I left school and moved to Hollywood.

What has been your most satisfying moment on a project?

About 25 years ago, I shot several interviews for the PBS special *Starring Katharine Hepburn*. I had the honor of lighting Henry Fonda on the veranda of his Beverly Hills estate. After the shoot, he said, 'Thanks, Russ, you made it easy for me.' I will never forget that moment.



Have you made any memorable blunders?

Too many to list. Mistakes can often lead to aesthetic revelations; yesterday's lens flare becomes today's artistic highlight. Be bold. Your blunders will teach you more than your triumphs.

What's the best professional advice you've ever received?

'Tell the story and make your stars look great.'

What recent books, films or artworks have inspired you?

The Motorcycle Diaries, because it felt like a film from the last golden age of Hollywood, the late Sixties and early Seventies, when so many intelligent, interesting, provocative and passionate movies were created. My muse is Peggy McClellan, Renaissance woman, who inspires me every day.

Do you have any favorite genres, or genres that you would like to try?

Like most cinematographers, I'd love to shoot a picture in black-and-white. I'd also like to shoot a musical in the style of the classic MGM musicals of the Forties and Fifties; I would design endless, sweeping shots that showcase the natural beauty of the dance without gratuitous and irritating rapid-fire MTV editing. My ultimate goal is to tell a good story with absolute economy. Elegant simplicity is elusive and difficult.

If you weren't a cinematographer, what might you be doing instead?

I cannot imagine doing anything else.

Which ASC cinematographers recommended you for membership?

George Spiro Dibie, Bobby Liu, Harry Stradling Jr. and Don FauntLeRoy.

How has ASC membership impacted your life and career?

This must be a dream. Please don't wake me! ASC members have so many opportunities to give back to the film community. We nurture and encourage students, share technological advances, honor the grand heritage of this glorious art form, and celebrate the exciting future of the movies. But really, the best part of being an ASC member is the chance to hoist a glass of cheer and share war stories with some of the finest, most gracious men and women I've ever had the privilege of knowing. ■

The Cast (In Order of Appearance)

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STEVE MASON ASC, ACS

"My father got me an old Bolex camera when I was 12. That's when I shot my first black-and-white film. I put some music to it and absolutely fell in love with the idea of making films. I knew this was what I wanted to do the rest of my life. I learned about the importance of persistence and concentration while working on other cameramen's crews and documentaries taught me to watch how natural light falls on faces. You have to get your mind into the script and design visuals that support the director and the characters. I try to previsualize everything — where the camera is going to be, how it is going to move, the look, and whether I'm going to light or not light different characters. My lighting and coverage comes out of the performance and staging. It's really important to give the actors the freedom to try different things."

Steve Mason's credits include *Basic*, *Rollerball*, *Bootmen*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Desperate Journey: The Allison Wilcox Story*, *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*, and the upcoming *The Wendell Baker Story*, *Backwater* and *Harsh Times*.

[All these films were shot on Kodak motion picture film.]

For an extended interview with Steve Mason, visit the Kodak website at www.kodak.com/go/onfilm.

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